The Wood Fire in No. 3

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Mac had the floor this afternoon.

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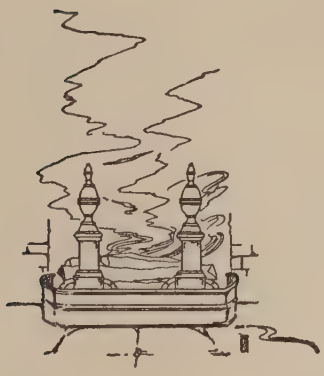
BY

F. HOPKINSON SMITH

ILLUSTRATED IN COLORS BY

ALONZO KIMBALL



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A WORD OF WELCOME:

To those of you who love an easy chair, a mug, a pipe, and a story; to whom a well-swept hearth is a delight and the cheery crackle of hickory logs a joy; the touch of whose elbows sends a thrill through responsive hearts and whose genial talk but knits the circle the closer,—as well as those gentler spirits who are content to listen—how rare they are!—do I repeat Sandy MacWhirter's hearty invitation: "Draw up, draw up! By the gods, but I'm glad to see you! Get a pipe. The tobacco is in the yellow jar."

Yours warmly,

The Back Log.

The Hearth,
Room No. 3, Old Building,
October, 1905.

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THE WOOD FIRE IN No. 3

PART I

In which Certain Details regarding a Lost Opal are Set Forth.

SANDY MacWHIRTER would have an open fire. He had been brought up on blazing logs and warm hearths, and could not be happy without them. In his own boyhood's home the fireplace was the shrine, and half the orchard and two big elms had been offered up on its altar.

There was no chimney in No. 3 when he moved in—no place really to put one, unless he knocked a hole in the roof, started a fire on the bare floor, and sat around it wigwam fashion; nor was there any way of support-

ing the necessary brickwork, unless a start was made from the basement up through every room to No. 3 and so on to the roof. But trifling obstacles like these never daunted MacWhirter. Lonnegan, a Beaux Arts man, who built the big Opera House, and who also hungered for blazing logs, solved the difficulty. It was only a matter of fifteen feet from where Mac's easel stood to the roof of the building that sheltered him, and it was not many days before Lonnegan's foreman had a hole in the roof and a wide and spacious chimney breast rising from Mac's floor, which filled the opening in the ceiling and rose some ten feet above it, the whole resting on an iron plate bolted to four upright iron rods which were in turn bolted to two heavy timbers laid flat on the roof. Lonnegan's men did the work, and Lonnegan settled with the landlord and forgot ever afterward to send Mac the bill, and hasn't to this day.

No one else inside the four walls of the Old Building had any such comfort. All the other denizens had heaters; or choked-up, shivering, contracted grates; or a half-strangled flue from the basement below. Poor Pitkin relied on a rubber tube fastened to his gas light, which was connected with a sort of Chinese tea-caddy of a stove propped up on four legs, and which was shifted about so as to thaw out the coldest spots in his studio.

It was a great day when Mac's fireplace was completed. Everybody crowded in to see it—not only the men from below and on the same floor, but half a dozen and more cronies from the outside. No one believed Lonnegan's yarn about the bolts, so natural and old-timey did the fireplace seem, until the great architect picked the plaster away with his knife and showed them the irons, and even then one doubting Thomas had to mount the scuttle stairs and peer out through the trap-door before he was convinced that mod-

ern science had lent a helping hand to recall a boyhood memory.

And the friends that this old fire had; and the way the men loved it despite the liberties they tried to take with it! And they did, at first, take liberties, and of the most exasperating kind to any well-intentioned, law-abiding, and knowledgeable wood fire. Boggs, the animal painter, whose studio lay immediately beneath MacWhirter's, was never, at first, satisfied until he had punched it black in the face; Wharton, who occupied No. 4, across the hall, would insist that each log should be stood on its head and the kindling grouped about it; while Pitkin, the sculptor, who occupied the basement because of his dirty clay and big chunks of marble, was miserable until he had jammed the back-log so tight against the besmoked chimney that not a breath of air could get between it and the blackened bricks.

But none of these well-meant but inexperi-

enced attacks ever daunted the spirit of this fire. It would splutter a moment with ill-concealed indignation, threatening a dozen times to go out in smoke, and then all of a sudden a little bubble of laughing flame would break out under one end of a log, and then another, and away it would go roaring up the chimney in a very ecstasy of delight.

Now and then it would talk back; I have heard it many a time, when Mac and I would be sitting alone before it listening to its chatter.

"Take a seat," it would crackle; "right in front, where I can warm you. Sit, too, where you can look into my face and see how ruddy and joyous it is. I'll not bore you; I never bored anybody—never in all my life. I am an endless series of surprises, and I am never twice alike. I can sparkle with merriment, or glow with humor, or roar with laughter, dependent on your mood, or upon mine. Or I can smoulder away all by myself, crooning

a low song of the woods—the song your mother loved, your cradle song—so full of content that it will soothe you into forgetfulness. When at last I creep under my gray blanket of ashes and shut my eyes, you, too, will want to sleep—you and I, old friends now with our thousand memories."

Only MacWhirter really understood its many moods — "Alexander MacWhirter, Room No. 3," the sign-board read in the hall below—and only MacWhirter could satisfy its wants; and so, after the first few months, no one dared touch it but our host, whose slightest nudge with the tongs was sufficient to kindle it into renewed activity.

It was not long after this that a certain sense of ownership permeated the coterie. They yielded the chimney and its mechanical contrivances to MacWhirter and Lonnegan, but the blaze and its generous warmth belonged to them as much as to Mac. Soon chairs were sent up from the several studios,

each member of the half-circle furnishing his own—the most comfortable he owned. Then the mugs followed, and the pipe-racks, and soon Sandy MacWhirter's wood fire in No. 3 became the one spot in the building that we all loved and longed for.

And Mac was exactly fashioned for High Priest of just such a Temple of Jollity: Merry-eyed, round-faced, with one and a quarter, perhaps one and a half, of a chin tucked under his old one—a chin though that came from laughter, not from laziness; broad-shouldered, deep-chested, hearty in his voice and words, with the faintest trace—just a trace, it was so slight—of his mother-tongue in his speech; whole-souled, spontaneous, unselfish, ready to praise and never to criticise; brimming with anecdotes and adventures of forty years of experience—on the Riviera, in Sicily, Egypt, and the Far East, wherever his brush had carried him—he had all the warmth of his blazing logs in his

grasp and all the snap of their coals in his eyes.

"By the Gods, but I'm glad to see you!" was his invariable greeting. "Draw up! draw up! Go get a pipe—the tobacco is in the yellow jar."

This was when Mac was alone or when no one had the floor, and the shuttlecock of general conversation was being battledored about.

If, however, Mac or any of his guests had the floor, and was giving his experience at home or abroad, or was reaching the climax of some tale, it made no difference who entered no one took any more notice of him than of a servant who had brought in an extra log, the lost art of listening still being in vogue in those days and much respected by the occupants of the chairs—by all except Boggs, who would always break into the conversation irrespective of restrictions or traditions.

MacWhirter.

Mac had the floor this afternoon.

I knew this from the sound of his voice through the half-closed door as I reached the top-floor landing.

"Refused, gentlemen, refused point blank," I heard Mac say. "He wouldn't let them search him; wouldn't empty his pockets as the others had done; it made a most disagreeable impression on every one at the table. Collins, his host, was amazed; so was Moulton."

My own head was now abreast of the old Chinese screen.

"What reason did he give?" Boggs asked.

"Didn't give any. Just hemmed and hawed, and blushed like a girl."

I was inside the cosy room now, its air etched with wavy lines of tobacco smoke, showing blue in the dim glare of the skylight overhead; had nodded to Boggs, whose face was just visible over the top of Mac's most comfortable chair—Boggs always hides

his bulk in this particular chair, having furnished none of his own, a weakness or selfishness which we all recognize and permit—and was adding my snow-covered coat and hat to a collection, facing the blazing logs, and within reach of their genial warmth, when Mac's voice again dominated the hum of questioning raised by the half-circle of toasting shins.

"Collins, of course, never said a word—how could he? The old fellow had been his friend for years; went to school with him. Now, gentlemen, what would you have thought?"

It was easy to see that our host had full possession of the floor. His feet were firmly planted on the half-worn Daghestan, his square, erect back turned to the crackling blaze, his head raised, arms swinging, hands extended, accentuating every point that he made with that peculiar twist of the thumb common to all painters. I dropped quietly

into a chair. Better keep still and smoke on with my ear-shutters fastened back and my eyes fixed on the speaker's face. The cue would come my way before Mac had got very far in his story.

Again Mac put the question, this time in a rising voice, demanding an answer.

"What would you have thought?"

"I give it up," said Pitkin. "I knew Peaslee. Life went against him, but that old fellow was as straight as a string. Why, he has been book-keeper for that bank for half a century, more or less; I used to keep an account there; queer-looking chap, all spectacles."

"Collins must have put the jewel in his pocket and had not been able to find it," remarked Ford, discussion now being in order; "like a man losing his railroad ticket and discovering it in his hat-band after he has searched every part of his clothes."

"Old fellow was short in his balance and

wanted to make it up," growled Boggs. Boggs did not mean a word of it, but it was his turn and he must hazard an opinion of some kind.

Mac smiled and a laugh went round. Poor old Tim Peaslee stealing Sam Collins's or anybody else's opal to straighten out a deficiency in his account was about as absurd a deduction to those who remembered him, as Diogenes losing his lantern in the effort to scrape acquaintance with a thief.

Marny, his face blue-white with his tramp through the snow, and Jack Stirling, in a new English Macintosh, now entered, shook their wet garments, filled their pipes from the yellow jar, and dragged up chairs to join the half-circle, the puffs of their newly filled pipes adding innumerable wavy lines to the etched plate of the atmosphere.

"Mac has got the most extraordinary story, Marny, that you ever heard," cried Wharton. "What do you think of old Tim

Peaslee helping himself to Sam Collins's jewelry?"

"Never heard of Peaslee or Collins in my life," answered Marny, dragging his chair closer and opening his chilled fingers to the blaze. "Jack may, he knows everybody—some he oughtn't to. Who are they, burglars or stockbrokers?"

"Why, Collins, who has that opal mine in Mexico. Old Tim was for years the bookkeeper of the Exeter Bank. You must have known Peaslee," persisted Wharton.

Marny shook his head, and Wharton turned to Mac.

"Begin all over again, old man, and we'll take a vote. Marny's head is as thick as one of his backgrounds."

"At the beginning?" asked MacWhirter, between the puffs of his pipe, freshly lighted now that his story had been told.

"Yes, from the time Sam Collins came to New York—everything."

Mac laid his pipe once more on the mantel, threw an extra stick on the fire from the pile by the chimney, raked the ashes clear of the front log, and resumed his position on the rug. Now that the circle was larger and he had been challenged to give every detail he intended to make his second telling of the extraordinary story more interesting, if possible, than the first.

"I'll give it to you exactly as Collins gave it to me; and, Boggs, you will please keep still until I get through. Wharton, change your seat so you can clap your hand over Boggs's mouth when he breaks out. Thanks.

"About two years ago Sam Collins came back to New York, first time in nearly twenty years. He had been up in Peru living in the clouds, digging for copper and not finding any, he told me; then he kept on to Ceylon, wandered around there for a while, and finally landed at Vera Cruz and went up into Mexico, until he struck the town of

Queretaro. You've been there, Wharton; I remember your sketch of the old Cathedral."

Wharton nodded, and settled himself deeper in his chair.

"Shot Maximilian there," whispered Boggs under his breath.

Mac glanced savagely at Boggs, but continued:

"On taking in the town Collins found that everybody, from the beggars in the Plaza to the bankers in the palaces, had their pockets full of opals, wads and wads of them, some big as duck-shot, some big as birds' eggs. Collins is an expert on anything that comes out of the ground, and the next morning he was astride of a burro and off to the mines, noting how the minerals lay and the dip of the land, and the next week he was away prospecting, and before the month was out he had bought a hill that was as bare as your hand of everything but bunch grass and sand fleas, and had ten half-breeds at work, and

by the end of the year he had struck hard-pan, with enough opals lying around loose to make him rich. This was two years ago, remember. Pretty soon Sam discovered that he needed more money to develop his mine, and he started for New York to look up his old friends to help him raise it.

"When Collins arrived he found that a lot of things could happen in twenty years: half of his friends were dead; some were scattered over the world, wandering as he had been; and out of fifty or more old chums who had known him at college only a dozen or more were left. Tim Peaslee was one of them.

"Sam loved Tim; he always had. For years they had kept up their letters; then Tim lost track of Collins, and communication ceased. All the way to New York Collins was thinking of Tim. If he was rich, they'd go in together on the mine; and if he was poor, he'd share what he had with him. The Tim he loved was not the kind of man to

shake hands with. His Tim was the sort of a fellow to hug and keep your hand on his knee while you talked to him.

"Sam found him in an old house in Bond Street—one of those high-stooped, passed-by wrecks that are being turned into Italian tenements, with wood and coal shops in the basement and sign painters in the garret. He was living with his old sister, Miss Peaslee—older than Tim. The two had a life interest in the property, and none of the heirs could take possession until these two were buried.

"It was dark when he reached Tim's and mounted the steps; too dark for him to notice the queer iron railings and newel posts red with rust, and the front door that hadn't had a coat of paint on it for years, nor the knob and knocker that were black with the weather. At his first ring no one answered; at the third, a woman with a basket opened the door. She was on her way out—that's why she opened it.

"'Yes, Mr. Peaslee and his folks lives on the top floor. He's our landlord. Walk right up. This door ain't locked till twelve o'clock, so ye can just shut it to behind ye. We have the first floor, and another family has the second, but they're moved out.'

"On the way upstairs, in the dim light of the single gas-jet, Sam made out the slender banisters and on each landing the solid mahogany doors that opened into the several rooms, showing him that it had once been a house of some pretensions.

"He knocked gently; there was a hurried scuffle inside, as if someone wanted to escape being seen, and Tim thrust out his head. He had on an old calico dressing-gown and was in his slippers, his glasses pushed back on his forehead.

"Sam told me he never had such a shock in his life as when he saw Tim. He had to look into his face twice and wait until he spoke before he was sure it was he. He had

left his chum a springy, enthusiastic young fellow of twenty-five, full of go and life, and he found him a dried-up, wizen-faced, bald-pated old fellow near fifty, who looked a hundred. While he had been climbing mountains, sleeping in the open air, working with a pick or rounding up cattle, poor old Tim had been driving a quill behind a desk, getting drier and drier, like an old gourd hung in an attic—all the hope shrunk out of him, all his joyousness gone.

" 'Who wants me?'

" 'Don't you know me, Tim? I'm Collins—Sam Collins,' and he caught hold of his limp hand.

" 'Collins?' muttered Tim, drawing back. 'I don't know but one—' here the light in the hall fell on Sam's face—'Not Sam, are you?' He knew him now. 'Come inside!' and he dragged him past the door, his shrivelled hand on the miner's collar. 'Ann, here's Sam—old Sam Collins! Where have you

been, you old rascal, all these years? My sister—you remember her, of course—we've been living here— Oh, Sam, but I'm glad to see you! What a great girth you've got on you, and so big in the shoulders! And what a queer hat! How did you find me?—Oh, you rascal!'

"This running fire of exclamations and questions was kept up until Sam had found a seat next the old sister, who was thinner even than Tim, and with a look in her eyes of a hungry child peering into a cake-shop. All this time Tim was holding on to Sam's big shoulders as if he was afraid he would escape.

"When Sam's gaze was free to wander about the room he found it choked full of old furniture of the oldest and most dilapidated kind—a mahogany sideboard with the knobs gone; sofas with the hair-cloth seats in holes, all good in their day, but all wanting the upholsterer and the cabinet-maker.

Not a dollar had been spent upon them for years. The life interest, Sam found out afterward, went with the furniture as well as the house.

"One thing struck Sam more than anything else, and that was Tim's tenderness over Miss Ann. When she coughed—and she coughed most of the time—Tim would start as if it hurt him. Once he went into the next room and brought her a shawl, and just before Sam left Tim poured out a spoonful of medicine for her and made her take it right before Sam, adding:

" 'It's only Sam; he's got a heart as big as an ox, and will understand. Won't you, Sam?'

"Next day Collins started in to raise the money for his mining. Tim introduced him to the cashier and the president of the Exeter, and they both looked Sam over and took in his wide sombrero and queer clothes, and examined his samples—one was a beauty, which

Tiffany offered him a big sum for—and then they wrote him a letter—that is, the president did—on the bank's paper, saying that they appreciated greatly the opportunity, etc., but the charter of the bank prevented, etc., and they had no money of their own, etc.—same old kind of a lying letter these men write when they can't get one hundred per cent. on an investment.

"Tim nearly fell off his stool with disappointment when Sam read him the letter, but Sam never turned a hair. If the old fossils in the Exeter didn't have the money, somebody else would; and, sure enough, a dry-goods man and a retired physician turned up, and the two roped in a young millionnaire, a fellow by the name of Moulton, who thought he knew it all, and *did*. The money was raised, and Sam got ready to go back to Mexico and start the mine on an enlarged scale. All this time he had been looking up his old school-friends, and the night before he started

he got them all together, including the new subscribers, the young millionnaire among them, and Sam, at the millionnaire's suggestion, called on old Solari, down in University Place, and arranged for a farewell dinner. Tim was to sit on his right hand and the retired physician on his left, and Sam was to make a proposition to his guests, half of whom were directors in the new company, the nature of which he kept secret even from Tim.

"The old book-keeper begged off, and vowed he couldn't go—hadn't been to a dinner for years; Sister Ann wasn't well, and needed him; and, besides, on that very night he would be up late at his home making up the month's returns—all the excuses a man hunts up when he is hiding the real reason that keeps him away. But Sam understood Tim by this time.

"'I forgot to tell you, Tim,' he came back to say, 'that you mustn't put on your

black evening clothes.' (Tim hadn't any, as Sam knew.) 'I'm going in my rough togs, so as to let everybody see me as I am every day, and the others will dress the same, and I want you to oblige me by not wearing yours. It will help me in my deal.'

"So Tim went, the only addition to his toilet being a new black tie which Miss Ann had made for him.

"The dinner was upstairs on the third floor, in Solari's back room—you all know it—same room Lonnegan had last year for that supper he gave us. Sam had told Solari to spare no expense, and to keep setting things up as long as anybody wanted them; and Solari carried out Collins's orders to the last bottle—way down to Chartreuse and Reina Victorias. There were oysters on the half-shell, and crab soup and an entrée of mushrooms, and a filêt with trimmings, and plump little quail on dry toast, salads, desserts, and so on.

"Tim, to the delight of everybody, and especially Sam, thawed out under the influence of the first bottle, and sang a comic song he had not sung since he and Sam had parted, and took every dish in its turn—he was twice helped to quail—and was so happy that Sam could hardly wait for the time to come when the secret he had up his sleeve was to be slipped out and exploded.

"When the coffee was served Sam got up on his feet, and in welcoming his guests took out the opal that Tiffany wanted to buy, and saying how confident he was that before the year was out he would be able to ship to them many more of even greater value and brilliancy, passed it to Tim to hand around the table, some of his old friends never having seen it.

"Tim passed it across the young millionnaire to a man next him, and after everybody had said how beautiful it was, and how they each wanted one just like it, it was

handed back to Tim, who laid it on the table beside his plate. There was no mistake about this part of the story, for the millionnaire called the retired physician's attention to it, remarking that as it lay on the white cloth by Tim's hand it looked like a drop of frozen absinthe—which wasn't bad for a millionnaire.

"Sam had the secret now well in hand—fuse all lighted, ready to be touched off:

"'Gentlemen,' he began, 'there are some men you have known for a short time, and you like them, and some go back to your boyhood, and those you love. I've got a friend here who is like that opal—clear as crystal and— Hand me the opal, Tim; I just want to dilate on it, and I can do it better if I have it in my hand and look into its eyes and yours.'

"Tim colored scarlet, and moved his arm quickly. The friend from boyhood, he knew,

was himself, and he was not accustomed to praise.

" 'Pass it along, old man!'

" 'I haven't got it, Sam,' came the reply.

" 'Yes, you have,' called out the young millionnaire. 'It's right there beside your glass; I saw it there a minute ago.'

" 'Well, if it was,' Tim stammered, 'it isn't here now.' It was the complimentary speech that Sam was about to make that was upsetting Tim, so Sam thought.

"By this time half the guests were on their feet.

" 'Look around among the glasses,' suggested one.

" 'Maybe it's under your napkin,' remarked another.

" 'I gave it to *you*, I thought,' said Tim, turning to the physician.

" 'No, you didn't. You've got it somewhere around; perhaps you've slipped it in your pocket.' There was a slight tone

of suspicion in the voice which jarred on Sam.

" 'No,' answered Tim helplessly. 'I didn't put it in my pocket. I don't know what I did with it.'

" 'Send for Hawkshaw the detective—lock the doors, and search every man down to his underwear!' shouted Sam in a serio-comic voice.

"Chairs were now being pushed back, and some of the men were on their knees groping around the floor near where Tim sat, the head waiter holding a candle from the table.

"All this time Sam was standing waiting to finish his speech, to him the event of the evening. The table was moved, and every square foot of the carpet gone over, Tim assisting in the search, but in a perfunctory way that attracted Sam's attention.

" 'Never mind, gentlemen, let it go,' Sam said. 'I can do without it. It will turn up somewhere; you've all seen it, anyhow, and

so it's just as good as if I held it up before you.'

" 'Some men, as I said, I have known from boyhood——'

"The young millionnaire now jumped up.

" 'Hold on, Mr. Collins; I'd like to find that opal before we do anything else. Nobody has swallowed it'—constant association with money had warped his judgment of human nature, perhaps. 'Here's what's in *my* clothes,' and he began unloading his keys, knife, loose change, and handkerchief from his coat-pocket and piling them up on the table.

"Every man followed his lead, the contagion of his example having spread through the room. The unloading was as much a part of the merriment of the evening as Tim's comic song or Sam's sallies of wit. Tim, all this time, had been edging near where Sam stood.

" 'Out with your stuff, Peaslee,' shouted

the millionnaire—'here, right on the table—everything.'

"Tim turned pale and made a step nearer Sam.

" 'I haven't got the opal, Sam; indeed I haven't!' There was a tone in his voice that was almost pathetic.

" 'Of course you haven't, old man, but out with your stuff, just as the others have. Hurry up!'

" 'I can't, Sam!' groaned Tim.

" 'You can't!'

" 'No, I can't! Please don't ask me. I must bid you good-night, gentlemen. Please let me go away,' and he moved to the door and shut it behind him.

"Every man looked at Sam. For a moment no one spoke. Collins himself was dumfounded.

" 'Damn queer, isn't it?' whispered the millionnaire to Sam. 'What do you think is the matter with him?'

" 'Nothing that YOU think!' said Sam, looking him square in the face, a peculiar glitter in his eye that some of his workmen knew when there was any trouble in the mine. 'Let us drink to his health. He is not accustomed to being out, and the wine has perhaps gone to his head.' "

MacWhirter reached for his pipe, knocked the bowl against the brickwork of the big fireplace to free it from its dead ashes, and turned again to the circle about him. At the same instant the back-log settled itself with a sigh of satisfaction, and a crackling of sparks—the fire's applause, no doubt—filled the hearth.

"Is that all?" broke in Boggs.

"Not quite," Mac answered. "All for that night, and all for the next day, so far as Tim was concerned, for the old fellow shut himself up in his room and said he was sick, and Sam had to leave for Mexico without seeing him."

"What did the others think?"

"Just what you would have thought, and *did*, when I told it awhile ago. That's why I asked you. The millionnaire believed, of course, Tim had stolen it, and so did the physician. Made such an impression on the new directors present that Sam smothered his intended surprise and left his speech unfinished.

"Three months after that Sam came back to New York with more opals, many of them much larger and finer than the one which had so mysteriously disappeared. He arrived after everybody had gone to bed—Tim Peaslee among them—and remembering the dinner, and where he had eaten it, and how good it was, he got into a cab and drove to Solari's. The head waiter looked him over for a moment—he still wore the same sombrero—and went out and got the clerk, who asked him his name; and then Solari came in and asked him more questions and laid the lost opal in

his hand. It had been found under a corner of the carpet when it had been taken up and shaken the week before, and Solari had been trying ever since to find some way of letting Sam know.

"It was now eleven o'clock, but that didn't make any difference to Sam. He laid a five-dollar bill on the table to pay for the supper he had ordered and hadn't time to eat, made a rush for the door, jumped into a cab and drove like mad to Bond Street. The outer door was open. He mounted the stairs three steps at a time and banged away at Tim's door. It happened to be Tim's night for working over his accounts, and he was still up.

" 'I've got it, Tim—rolled under the carpet. Here it is. Let me hug you, you old fraud! Where's Miss Ann? I want to see her. Go and dig her out of bed, I tell you!'

"All this time Sam was hugging Tim like a bear, lifting him up and down as if he had been a baby. When they got inside and Tim

had shut the hall door, and had tiptoed toward his sister's room and had seen that her door was shut tight—so tight that she couldn't hear—he came back to where Sam stood and nearly shook his arm off.

" 'Found it under the carpet, did they? Oh, I'm so glad! I never shall forget that night, Sam. They wanted me to empty my pockets, and I couldn't. I didn't care what they thought. Oh, Sam, it was awful! You didn't think I had taken it, did you?'

" 'No, old man, I didn't, and that's square. But why didn't you unload with the others?'

"Tim craned his head toward Miss Ann's door, listened intently for a moment, and said:

" 'I had one of those little fat quail in my coat-tail pocket; they passed me two. Ann used to love them, and I knew you wouldn't mind; and I lied about it when I gave it to her and told her you sent it. Don't tell her, please.' "

As Mac finished, a log which had perhaps leaned too far forward in its effort to listen, lost its balance and rolled over on the hearth, sending a shower of astonished sparks scurrying up the chimney. Marny bent forward and sent it back into place with his foot. Wharton pushed back his chair and without a word reached for his coat; so did Pitkin and the others. The story had evidently made a deep impression on them, so much so that Marny didn't speak to Pitkin or Wharton until they reached the Square, and then only to say: "Regular old trump, that bookkeeper—wasn't he?"

Boggs still sat hunched up in his chair. He was less emotional than dear old Marny, but his heart was in the right place all the same.

"Bully story, Mac—one of your best. Heard something like that before. Heard it in two or three ways—as a peach in a Bishop's pocket; as a snuff-box in an admiral's. You're a daisy, Mac, for warming

over club chestnuts. But that's all right. Now, what was the surprise Collins had up his sleeve when he got up to make his speech that night?"

"Why, Tim's appointment as book-keeper of the new company. His refusal to be searched of course knocked that in the head. He's treasurer now; has a big slice of the stock that Sam gave him for luck; has lost all his wrinkles, looks ten years younger, and is getting a new crop of hair. Miss Ann has got over her cough and is spry as a kitten—spryer. They are all out at the mine; she keeps house for them both."

PART II

Wherein the Gentle Art of Dining is Variously Described.

"MOVE back, Lonnegan, and let me get at it!" cried MacWhirter the next afternoon. "You jab a fire as if it were something you wanted to kill! Coddle it a little, like this," and Mac laid the warm cheeks of two logs together and a sputtering of hot kisses filled the hearth.

"Don't call him 'Lonnegan,' Mac, in that rude and boisterous way," expostulated Boggs. "It jars on his Royal Highness's finer sensibilities. Say 'Mr. Lonnegan, will you have the kindness to remove your beautiful and well-groomed and fashionable carcass until I can add a stick or two to my fire?' Lonnegan has been in society—out every night this week, I hear."

Mac replaced the tongs and straightened his back, his face turned toward Lonnegan.

"Were you really on exhibition, Lonny?" Mac's impatience never lasts many seconds.

The architect nodded, then answered slowly:

"Five dinners and a tea."

"All rich houses, I suppose?"

"Very rich."

"And all wanted plans for country seats, of course?"

"Some of them—two, I think."

"Extra dry champagne, under-done canvas-backs and costly terrapin served every five minutes?"

"No. Extra dry canvas-backs, done-over terrapin, and cheap champagne. Served but once, thank God!"

"Wore your swell clothes, I presume?"

"Yes, swallow-tail on me every night and a head on me every morning," answered

Lonnegan with a grave face. "Why do you ask, Mac?"

"Oh, just to keep in touch with the history of my country, old man."

While the two men talked, Pitkin and Van Brunt walked in—the latter a Dutch painter in New York for the winter, just arrived by steamer. The atmosphere of No. 3 was evidently congenial to the man, for, after a hand-shake all round, the Hollander produced his own pipe, filled it from a leather pouch in his pocket, and sat down before the fire as unconcerned and as contented as if he'd been one of the fire's circle from the day of its lighting. Good Bohemians, so called the world over, have an international code of manners, just as all club men of equal class agree upon certain details of dress and etiquette, no matter what their tongue. The brush, the chisel, the trowel, and the test-tube are so many talismans—open sesames to the whole fraternity.

The Hollander had overheard the last half of Mac's sally and Lonnegan's grave rejoinder.

"Yes, the terrapin and the canvas-back, I hear much of them. What does a terrapin look like, Mr. Lonnegan?"

"A terrapin, Van Brunt," interrupted Boggs, "is a hide-bound little beast that sleeps in the mud, is as ugly as the devil, and can bite a tenpenny nail in two with his teeth when he's awake. When he is boiled and picked clean, and served with Madeira, he is the most toothsome compound known to cookery."

"Correctly described, Boggs—'compound' is good," said Lonnegan. "The up-to-date-modern-millionnaire-terrapin, Mr. Van Brunt, is a reptile compounded of glue, chicken-bones, chopped calf's head, and old India-rubber shoes. When ready for use it tastes like flour paste served in hot flannel. I may be wrong about the chopped calf's head, but

I'm all right about the India-rubber shoes. I've been eating them this week, and part of a heel is still here"—and he tapped his shirt-front.

"And the canvas-back?" continued Van Brunt, laughing. "It is a duck, is it not?"

"Occasionally a duck—I speak, of course, of tables where I have dined—but seldom a canvas-back."

"And they live in the marshes, I hear, and feed on the wild celery—do they not?"

"No; they live in a cold storage six months in the year, and feed on sawdust and ice," replied Lonnegan with the face of a stone god.

"Hard life, isn't it?" remarked Boggs to the circle at large.

"For the duck?" asked Pitkin.

"No—for Lonnegan. Orders for country houses come high."

"Serves him right!" ventured Marny.

"No business eating such messes; ought to get back to——"

"Hog and hominy," interrupted Lonnegan, still with the same grave face.

"Both. That's what most of your millionnaires were brought up on."

Pitkin sprang from his seat, and, thrusting both hands into his pockets, burst out with—

"Gentlemen, you really don't know what good eating is! The taste for terrapin and canvas-back is part of the degeneration of the age; so is it for truffles, mushrooms, caviare, and a lot of such messes. The French, whose cuisine we imitate, turn out a lot of flat-chested, spindle-shanks on sauces and ragouts. We'll go to the devil in the same way if we follow their cooks. The English raise the highest standard of man on tough bread and the most insipid boiled mutton in the world. What we have got to do is to get back to our plain old-fashioned kitchens. The

best dinner I ever had in my life was when I was sixteen years old, and even now, whenever I get a whiff from a shop where they are cooking the same combination, I can no more pass it than a drunkard can pass a rum-mill."

"Drunk on pork and beans!" growled Boggs in a low voice to Marny. "I knew you'd come to no good end, Pitkin. You ought to sign a pledge and join a non-adulterated food society."

"Something better than pork and beans, you beggar!" retorted Pitkin—"something that makes my mouth water every time I think of it. And hungry! the prodigal son was an over-fed alderman to me; real gnawing, empty kind of hunger."

Ford stood up and faced the circle.

"The great sculptor, gentlemen, is about to tell us what he knows of biblical history. Silence!"

"I had been out gunning all day——"

"I didn't know you were a sportsman," interpolated Boggs.

"I had been gunning all day," Pitkin repeated firmly, ignoring the Chronic Interrupter, "and had lost my way over the mountains. Just about dark I reached the valley and made for a small cabin with a curl of smoke coming out of the chimney. As I came nearer I got a whiff from a fry-pan that made me ravenous—one of those smells you never forget to your dying day. As I opened the gate I could see the glow of a fire in the stove, the smell getting stronger every minute. Inside, I found a man sitting in his shirt-sleeves by a table. The table had two plates on it, two knives, two forks, and two big china cups. Bending over the hot stove was his wife. She was stirring a large bowl filled to the brim with buckwheat batter. On the stove was a hot griddle and a fry-pan, and coiled in the fry-pan, trim as a rope coiled flat on a yacht's deck, lay a string of

link sausages, with the bight of the line sticking up in the centre, like Mac's thumb.

" 'Are you Pitkin's boy?' the man said, after I had explained.

" 'Yes.'

" 'Sit down and eat.'

"The old man had two cakes, and I had two cakes. They were griddled in fours, and we both had a link of sausage with each instalment. I never moved from my chair until the tide-mark on the bowl had gone down five inches, and the core of the sausages looked as if a solid shot had struck it. That smell! and the way it all tasted, and the little brown frazzlings around the edges of the celestial cakes, and the sizzlings of fat on the sausages, and the boiling hot coffee that washed it all down! Oh, go to with your Delmonico dishes! Give me the days of my youth! If I had but four breaths left in me, and if somebody should pass that pan of sausages under my nose, I could rise up and

whip my weight in wild-cats. And yet that smell doesn't bring to my memory the way my hunger was satisfied, or how the food tasted. What I recall is the low-ceiled room, and the glow of the fire; the warmth and comfort everywhere, and the high light on the old Frau's face bending over her griddle. You'd just love to have painted that old woman, Mac."

The Hollander had listened quietly and without comment, both to Lonnegan's chaff and to Pitkin's enthusiastic recital.

"Ah, yes, you are quite right, Mr. Pitkin; after all, it is the imagination that is fed, not the stomach."

The measured tones of the speaker's voice at once commanded attention; even Boggs twisted his head to catch his words:

"It is his imagination, too, which suffers when a man loses his money and becomes poor. What he misses most, then, is not his horses and carriages and fine houses; it is his

table, and the clean napkins and the linen, and hot plates and the quite thin glasses. Is it not so? I can think of nothing more satisfying than a well-appointed table, with the servants about and the dishes properly served, and with the flowers, silver, and glass, the better wines coming later, the coffee and cigar at the end. And I can think of nothing more pitiful than for a man who has had all this, to be obliged to stand at a cheap counter and eat a cheap sandwich. My father used to tell me a story about the spendthrift son of an old baron who lived in my town, by the name of De Ruyter, and who spent in just two years every guilder his father left him. Then came roulette, and at last he was a tout for gaming-houses—so poor that he had but one coat to his back. All this time, having been born a gentleman, he managed to keep himself clean, his clothes brushed and mended, and his shirt and collar ironed. That is quite difficult for a man who is poor.

"One day an old friend of his dead father's, a very rich man, took pity on him, and asked him to call at his house so that he might arrange to get him work. He received him in his library and rang for cigars and brandy, which his servant brought on a silver plate. The brandy the poor fellow drank, but the cigar he begged permission to put in his pocket and smoke later in the day. It was one of those great cigars the rich Hollanders smoke, about as long as your hand and thick like two fingers. This one had a little band around it, with the coat of arms of the gentleman stamped in gold; not a cigar you can buy even in Amsterdam, but a cigar made especially for very big customers like this one.

"When young De Ruyter went out from the library he carried a letter to a merchant on the dock, which got for him a situation at ten guilders a week, and this big cigar. All the way to his lodgings in the garret he kept his hand on it as it lay flat in his waist-

coat-pocket. At every street corner he took it out carefully to see that it was not mashed or broken. When he pushed in his room door he began to look around for a place to put it. He was afraid to carry it around with him for fear of crushing it. At last he saw a crack in the plaster just above the bed, showing two open laths. He wrapped it most carefully in paper and laid it in the opening; here it would be dry and out of danger; here he could always be sure that it was safe. Then he presented his letter and went to work for the merchant on the dock.

"All that week he waited for Saturday night, when he would get his first ten guilders, and all that week before he went to sleep he would take a look at the cigar to be sure it was there. Every morning when he awoke he did the same thing. When Saturday night came, and the money was laid in his hand, he hurried to his garret, washed himself clean, brushed the only coat he owned, took

out the precious cigar, laid it on his bed where it would be safe while he finished dressing, put his hat on one side of his head in his old rakish way, gave a look at himself in the broken glass, and downstairs he goes humming a tune to himself. He was very happy. Now he would have the best dinner he had had for months, and feel like a gentleman once more. And the cigar! Ah, that would end it all up! You see, gentlemen, with us the whole dinner is only the cigar; everything is arranged most carefully for that.

"Then De Ruyter walks into Van Hoesen's, the largest café we have in my town; stands until the head waiter recognizes him and comes over to his side; orders with his old magnificent manner the wines, the soup, the entrées, even the anchovies after the sweets—that is a custom of ours—the whole costing ten guilders, with one guilder to the waiter. When it was served he sat himself down, opened his napkin, tipped the news-

paper where he could glance at it, and ate very slowly like a man of leisure.

"When the coffee was passed the head waiter brought to him an assortment of cigars on a tray, some one guilder each, some five cents. De Ruyter pushed them away with a contemptuous wave of the hand, saying, 'There is nothing you have to my taste; I will smoke my own.'

"The great moment had now arrived. He paid his bill, ordered a fresh candle, waited until the head waiter, whose guilder had made him all the more obsequious, had lighted it and stood waiting where he could see, and then slipped his hand into his inside pocket for the cigar. It was not there! Then he remembered that he had not taken it from the bed.

"He ran all the way home. There lay the cigar on the blanket. The next instant it was on the floor and under his heel.

" 'Lie there, damn you!' he said, crush-

ing it to pieces. 'You have spoiled my dinner!'

"You see, gentlemen, it was not the hunger of the empty stomach; it was a starved imagination that was ravenous like a wolf. Ah, cannot you feel for the poor fellow? All the week hungry, one great idea of the dignity of rank in his mind, and then to have his triumph spoiled, and under the eyes of the head waiter, too! And such beasts of waiters they are at home, with their eyes seeing everything and their tongues never still! My father, when he would tell the story, would tap his chair and say, 'Ah, poor devil! such a pity—such a pity he forgot it! It would have tasted so good to him!' That was a word of my father's—'He forgot it—he forgot it,' he would say, shaking his finger at us."

"All to the credit of your father, Van Brunt," burst out Marny; "but if you want

my candid opinion of your blue-blooded, busted baron, I think he was a selfish brute, without the first glimmer of what a gentleman should have done under such circumstances, and I leave it to everybody here to decide whether I'm right or wrong. What he ought to have done was to hunt around for some of his friends, order a dinner for two, hand his friend the cigar and take a cheap one from the waiter for himself. What you call 'fine eating' has nothing to do with either the stomach or with the imagination. Fine eating is an excuse for good fellowship; when you don't have that, it is a 'stalled ox' and the rest of it. What you want is to open with a laugh and eat straight through to that same kind of music. All the good dinners in the world were jolly dinners; all the poor ones were funeral gatherings, no matter how good the cooking. I'll give you an idea of what a good dinner ought to be. None of your selfish, solitary-confinement sort of a

meal like this self-centred Dutchman's, but a rip-roaring, waistcoat-swelling, breath-catching, hilarious feast, which began with a hurrah, continued with every man singing psalms of thanksgiving over the dishes and the company, and ended with a tempest of good cheer and everybody loving everybody else twice as much for having come together."

"Clam-chowder club, of course," growled Boggs, "with a brass band and a cord of firewood, and three-legged stools to sit on."

Marny glared at the Chronic Interrupter, made a movement with his hand as if to compel his silence, and continued:

"We had eaten nothing since breakfast but five raw clams apiece, and——"

"Where was all this, Marny, anyhow?" asked Boggs.

"Down at Uncle Jesse Conklin's, on Cap Tree Island," retorted Marny impatiently.

"All right—sounded as if it might be at a summer boarding-house. Go ahead!"

"No, down on Great South Bay. The Stone Mugs had an outing and I went along. These clams coming on an empty stomach and being right out of the salt water and fresh and cold——"

"Mixed in your statements, old man: can't be salt and fresh at the same time. But go on! So far we've only got five clams to be hilarious on——"

Marny reached over and grabbed Boggs by the collar.

"Will you shut up, or shall I throw you over the banisters?"

"I'll shut up—like your clam; won't say another word, so help me!" and Boggs held up one hand as if to be sworn.

"These clams," continued Marny, releasing his hold on Boggs's collar, "coming as they did on an empty stomach, made every man ravenous. French shrimps, Dutch pickles, and Swedish anchovies—all the appetizers you ever heard of—were mild compared to them.

Uncle Jesse had opened them himself, the ten men standing around taking the contents of each shell from the end of Uncle Jesse's fork and then waiting their turns until the fork came their way again. All this was under a shed in full view of the harbor and the old man's boats and buildings.

"When the sun went down we went into the bar-room, and Uncle Jesse compounded a mixture which made an afternoon call on the five clams, and by that time we could have eaten each other. Six o'clock came, and no signs of anything. Half past six, and not the faintest smell of fried, boiled, or roasted: no hurrying waiters in sight; no maids in aprons; nothing indicating any preparation or any place for it to preparate in unless it was a room behind a small white-pine door which Uncle Jesse had locked in full view of the hungry crowd. Only once did he explain this mystery; that was when he jerked his thumb in the direction of the vacancy on the

other side of the panels, and remarked sententiously, 'Won't be long now.'

"Soon a wild misgiving arose in our minds. Had anything happened to the cook, or would the simple repast—we had left the details to Uncle Jesse—consist of only clams and cocktails?

"All this time Uncle Jesse was patient and polite, but almighty mysterious. Bets now began to be made in whispers by the men: It would be thin oyster soup, pumpkin pies, and cider; or cold corn beef and preserves; or, worse still, codfish balls and griddle-cakes. Seven o'clock came—seven-five—seven-ten. Then a gong sounded in the next room, and Uncle Jesse sprang to the door, raised one hand while the other fumbled with the lock, and shouted as he swung back the door:

" 'Solid men to the front!'

"You should have seen that table! One long perspective of bliss—porter-house steak and broiled blue-fish—porter-house steak and

broiled blue-fish—porter-house steak and broiled blue-fish down to the end of the table; and alongside each plate a quart of extra-dry, frappéed to half a degree, and a pint of Burgundy the temperature of your sweet-heart's hand! All about were heaps of home-made bread and flakes of butter, and— Oh, that table!

"We stood paralyzed for a moment, and then sent up a roaring cheer that nearly lifted the roof. Uncle Jesse wasn't going to sit down, but we grabbed him by the shoulders and started him on the run for the end of the table, and there he sat until only heaps of bones and dead bottles marked the scene of action. Whenever a man could get his breath he broke out in song, everybody joining in. 'Oh, dem golden fritters!' was chanted to an accompaniment of clattering forks on empty plates, the cook and his staff craning their heads through the door and helping out with a double shuffle of their own.

"Coffee was served in the bar-room, and all filed out to drink it, every man full to his eyelids and saturated with a contentment that only Long Island blue-fish and Fulton Market steak with the necessary liquids and solids could produce.

"While we smoked on and sipped our coffee, Uncle Jesse's silences became more frequent, and soon the old fellow dozed off to sleep. He was over seventy then, and was used to having a nap after dinner.

"Now came the best part of the feast. Every man tiptoed out of the room, overhauled his sketch-trap, took out charcoal, color tubes and brushes, red chalk, whatever came handy, and started in to work—some standing on chairs above where the old man sat sound asleep, others working away like mad on the coarse, whitewashed walls, making portraits of him—sketches of the landing and fish houses we had seen during our waiting—outlines of the bar and background, no

one breathing loud or even whispering, so afraid they would wake him—until every square foot of the walls were covered with sketches. When we were through, someone coughed, and the old man sat up and began to rub his eyes. Pleased! Well, I should think so! He gave one bound, made a tour of the room studying each sketch, dodged under his bar and began to set up things, and would have continued to set up things all night had we permitted it. Every spring after that, when he rewhitewashed the old room, he would work carefully around each sketch, the new whitewash making a mat for the pictures. People came for miles up and down the bay to see them, and there was more extra-dry and trimmings sold that summer than ever before. Ever after that, whenever a friend of any member of the Stone Mugs went ashore at Cap Tree Island, and after settling his score mentioned incidentally that he knew So-and-So of the Mugs, and had heard of the

wonderful dinner, etc., the old man would always push his money back to him with:

" 'Not a cent—not a cent! Stay a week and order what you want, and if you don't want everything in the house I'll get my gun.' "

"Haven't got a time-table, have you, Marny," asked Boggs feelingly, "of the boat that goes to Cap Tree Island?"

"Do you no good, Boggs," answered Jack Stirling. "The old man has been in heaven these ten years. I knew his broiled blue-fish —none better. Marny is right—they were wonderful. But really, Marny, do you call that a good dinner?—ten men, fifteen bottles of assorted wines, five steaks, five broiled fish, and——"

"Well, what else would you call it? What would you want?" retorted Marny.

"What else? Oh, my dear Marny! and you ask that question!"

"Wasn't there enough to eat?"

"Plenty."

"Wine all right?"

"Perfect."

"Jolly crowd of the best fellows in the world?"

"Yes."

"What then?"

"What then, you fish-monger? Why, just one woman! Let me tell you of a dinner!"

Jack was on his feet now, his hand outstretched, his eyes partly closed as if the scene he was about to describe lay immediately beneath his gaze.

"It was on a balcony overlooking St. Cloud —all Paris swimming in a golden haze. There were violets—and a pair of long gray gloves on the white cloth—and a wide-brimmed hat crowned with roses, shading a pair of brown eyes. Oh! such eyes! 'A pint of Chablis,' I said to the waiter; 'sole à la Marguerey, some broiled mushrooms,

But the perfume of the violets and the way she looked at me.

and a fruit salad—and please take the candles away; we prefer the twilight.'

"But the perfume of the violets—and the lifting of her lashes—and the way she looked at me, and——"

Jack stopped, bent over, and gazed into the smouldering coals of the now dying fire.

"Go on, Jack," urged Pitkin in an encouraging tone—they had lived together in the same studio in the Quartier, these two, and knew each other's lives as they did their own pockets,—or each other's, for that matter.

"No, I'm not going on—only waste it on you fellows. That's all. Just one of my memories, my boy. But it comes from wet violets, mark you, not from fry-pans, cold bottles, or hot fish," and he glanced at Marny.

PART III

With Especial Reference to a Girl in a Steamer Chair.

"DON'T be angry, Colonel,"—no mortal man knows why Mac calls me "Colonel,"—"but would you mind leaving that red rose you've got in your button-hole outside in the hall, or some place where I can't smell it? Red roses have a singular effect on me." I had come in earlier than the others this afternoon and had found Mac alone.

I looked at Mac in astonishment. Peculiar as he sometimes is, hatred of flowers is not one of his eccentricities.

"Why, I thought you loved roses!"

"I do—all except red ones."

I unpinned the rose from my button-hole and laid it in a glass on the shelf over his wash-basin.

"All right; anything to please you, Mac. Now out with it; give me the name of the girl, and tell me why."

Mac laughed quietly to himself and settled down in his chair. For some time he did not speak.

"Go on; I'm waiting."

"Oh, it brings up a memory, that's all, Colonel. You heard what Stirling said about the perfume of violets bringing back to him the little dinner he had with Christine Levoix at the Bellevue overlooking the Seine, didn't you?"

"Yes, but he didn't mention the girl's name."

"I know; but it was Christine. I remember that hat and the gloves. In my day they were black, not gray, and came up to her shoulders, like Yvette's. The eyes, though, never changed, no matter who sat opposite. Stirling bought a lot of violets that year; so did some of the others in the

Quartier, until the Russian carried her off to Moscow," and again Mac laughed softly to himself. "Well, perfumes produce that same effect on me."

"Of violets?" I asked, twisting my head to look into Mac's eyes.

"No—tarred hemp and roses." Then he added slowly and thoughtfully, as if he were recalling some incident in his past life: "Quite a different kind of girl, my boy, from Christine; about as different as—well, there isn't any comparison. Yes, tarred hemp and red roses; funny combination, isn't it?—and yet I never catch the odor of one without smelling the other. And the whole scene comes back, too, every detail: the rolling ship; the girl as she lay in her chair, the roses in her lap; the tones of the Captain's voice (I have sometimes heard them in my sleep); the glare of the overhead light, and then the splash. Queer things, these memories!"

Mac paused, and smoked on quietly.

I made no answer. If you want Mac at his best, never interrupt him. When he is in one of his reminiscent moods his philosophy, his knowledge of life, his wide personal experience, his many adventures by land and sea make him the most delightful of conversationalists, while his choice of words and marvellous powers of description—talking as a painter talks, one who sees and who, therefore, can make you see; using words as some men do pigments with all the force of their contrasts—make his descriptions but so many brilliantly colored pictures. Then his voice! Suddenly, without a moment's warning, your eyes fill up, leaving you wondering why, until you remember some throat tone that vibrated through you like the note of a violin.

When he is in one of these moods he rarely looks at me or at anyone who listens, especially when he is alone with some one of his chums—and we two were alone this after-

noon, it being Varnishing Day, and all of the men at the Academy. He looks up at the ceiling, lying back in his chair, talking to some crack or stain in the plastering, or drops his head and talks to the smouldering coals, his human eyes fixed on the logs. This habit of talking to whatever is within the reach of his hands or legs—his brushes, palette, colors, the chair that gets in his way, the rug he stumbles over—is characteristic of the man; woodsmen have it who live alone in great forests. Mac's explanation is that he lived so much alone in his early life that he acquired the habit in self-defence. The fire, however, seems to understand, never answering back as it does to me when I try to punch it into life, but simmering away like a slow-boiling pot, giving out a steady glow for hours as it listens, nursing its heat until the master has finished or puts on another log.

Mac refilled his pipe, rested the tongs where his hand could grasp them, and con-

tinued, his big shoulders filling the chair, the light of the blaze on his humorous, kindly face.

"There are great contrasts in life, my boy, that never fail to interest me—big Rembrandt things that stand out sharp and solid, sudden as the exit from a foul shaft into a sunny winter's day, white and cold. And the reverse side—the black side. That is the worst of these contrasts, the darks always predominate—out of a yacht's warm cabin, for instance, into a merciless, hungry sea, without a moment's warning. No, nothing to do with my memory of tarred hemp and red roses; only to make my point clear to you," and Mac's head sank the lower in his chair. "Did you ever focus your mind, for one thing, on the contrasts that the two sides of a nine-inch brick wall of any house in town present? Did you never lie in your bed, with your head to the plaster, and wonder what was going on nine inches away from your

ears? I have; I do it now. It may be sorrow or cruelty or death, if we did but know —some girl mourning for her lover; some woman crouching in fear; some silent body, cold in a sheet. Not always so, of course; many times the happiness is on their side and all the misery on ours; but the two atmospheres are never alike. Only nine inches of wall! Shut it out as we may, cover it with tapestries or pictures or paint, it is still within that many inches of our ears. What a blessing we can't see! Life would be a hell for some of us if we saw both sides of its brick walls at once. I try now and then to get a glimpse of both sides because of the effects I get of light and shadow—they always appeal to me. When I do I often get a heart wrench that upsets me for days, and yet the next opportunity I am at it again."

Once more Mac paused and looked into the fire, as if he were trying to recall to

his mind, among its glowing, heaped-up coals, some picture in that rich past of his.

"And that old perfume of tarred hemp and roses," I asked, "does that suggest one of them?"

"Yes, one of the strangest I ever experienced; and yet it was only one of the things that goes on every day. A steamer's deck was the brick wall this time: On our side a cloudless sky, fresh air, light, chairs filling the length of the deck, whisperings in corners, two lovers hanging over the rail, some in the bow away from intruders. Now and then a line of song wafted from open cabin windows. Seaward, a stretch of steely blue dominated by a clear, round moon, its light flooding a pathway of silver to the very side of the ship, a pathway along which angels might have stepped—were stepping, if we could have seen.

"This was one of the times when I had both sides of the wall in review; she did not.

Her heart and mind were on other things. No, nothing that you think, old man; not another Christine—I left all that behind me; not anybody in particular, really; just a girl I met on board. There were a dozen others as pretty—prettier. Our steamer chairs happened to come together, that was all. We were but two days out, and her roses were still fresh—big red ones that some of her friends had sent her. They lay in her lap over her steamer rug. I picked them up for her when they dropped to the deck, and so the acquaintance began.

"Such a happy girl, with a fresh, sunburnt skin, and strong chest, and capable, earnest eyes; no nonsense about her, no coquetry."

Mac hesitated for an instant and a look of peculiar tenderness came into his face—one I always remembered. Then he went on:

"Just a plain, straightforward American girl, with a good mother at home and a matter-of-fact father who had sent her abroad

with an aunt who was flat on her back in her cabin most of the time; she herself looked as if she had never known a day's sickness in her life. This was her first trip abroad. Half a dozen young men and as many young girls had come to see her off, and her share of the flowers sent on board had been the largest, and she was as happy over it as a child with a new toy—that kind of a girl. She wanted, of course, to know about Mt. Blanc and the Rhigi, and whether the Salon would be open, and which pictures she ought to see, and what at the Luxembourg—all the questions a girl asks when she finds you can paint. Her joyousness, though, was what appealed to me. I like happy people. To her the deck of the steamer was the top of a great hill from which she looked down on sunshine and peace; no clouds, no dark shadows; only perspectives of greater happiness yet to come. This was her side of the wall.

"I did not disturb her outlook. What use would it have been? Why tell her of what was going on, for instance, under her very eyes? Why let her know that that tightly built young man who seemed to be so devoted to the pale, hollow-eyed gentleman of sixty, sitting beside him in the smoking-room or in the steamer chairs—never five feet away from him day or night—was a Scotland Yard detective, and that the hollow-eyed invalid would have a pair of handcuffs slipped over his white, trembling wrists as soon as the gang-plank was fastened to the dock? Or why let her know that the thoughtful, clean-shaven young man who now spent most of his time in walking the deck had never entered the smoking-room since the first night, when the purser took him one side and, calling him by a name not on the passenger list had informed him in measured tones that it might interfere with his comfort if he took the wrapper from another

pack of his own or anybody else's cards during the remainder of the voyage. Neither did I tell her, that third night out, where I had spent the afternoon, except to say that I had been with Mr. Hunter, the Chief Engineer, in his room several decks below where we sat—down among the furnaces and hot steam and plunging pistons—adding that the Chief was a great friend of mine and had been for years. If you ever get to know him as I do he may some time, in a burst of confidence, open the drawer of a locker behind his bunk and show you a little paper box, and inside of it a small bit of copper about the size of a big cent with a crossbar and a ribbon, saying that it was for gallant conduct or something like it.

"But that has got nothing to do with my perfume of tarred rope and roses—quite another affair altogether—an affair that the Chief and I had had some previous talk about; and so I was not surprised when his

messenger approached my chair and the girl's, and said in a low voice, bending close to me:

" 'Mr. Hunter's compliments, sir, and he would like to see you in his room, if you don't mind. He says if you can't come it will be at twelve sharp, and you're not to mention it to any of the passengers, sir.'

"She looked at me curiously, having heard the messenger's words, but I did not explain, and, rising quickly, left her with the roses in her lap—her last bunch, she told me.

"Hunter met me at the door; the Second Engineer and the ship's Doctor were inside his room.

" 'That stoker died about an hour ago, wasn't it, Doctor?' Hunter asked, turning to the ship's surgeon.

" 'Yes.'

"These men are accustomed to such incidents; there is hardly a voyage without one

or more of them. To me it was but the opening of another crack in one of my brick walls.

" 'What of?' I asked.

" 'Exhaustion; want of food, perhaps, and the heat. The heart gave out,' answered the Doctor in a perfunctory tone.

" 'Do many of them go that way?' I asked.

" 'Yes, when they strike the furnaces for the first time. This man was too old—over fifty, I should say—and should never have been taken on,' and he glanced reprovingly at Hunter.

" 'He begged so hard,' interrupted the Second Engineer, 'I let him on. We are short of men, too, on account of the strike—' He spoke as if in defence of his Chief. 'Didn't look to me to be so old till he caved in. Shall I make a box for him, sir?' and he turned to Hunter.

" 'Yes, and paint it.'

"The Chief slipped his arm through mine,

led me to a seat on the sofa beside his desk, and continued:

" 'He came aboard the day before we left New York. It was about seven o'clock at night, and I had changed my clothes and was going up-town to the theatre. I stood at the end of the gang-plank for a minute looking up the dock, pretty clean of freight by that time, and this man came creeping down along the side of the ship, looking about him in a way I didn't like. As he got nearer he stopped under a dock light, fumbled in his pocket and brought out a letter. He wasn't ten feet from me, and so I could see his face. He read it two or three times over, turning the leaves, and then he slipped it back into his pocket again and looked up at the ship's side; then he saw me and came straight for me.

" ' "I must go home," he said; " can you take me on?"

" ' "What at?" I got a look into his eyes

then, and saw he was no thief; seemed more like a carpenter or a bricklayer.

" ' "Anything you can give me."

" ' "Stoking?"

" ' "Yes, if there's nothing else."

" 'Then the Second Engineer came down the gang-plank and I turned the man over to him and went uptown. When I heard he was to be buried I sent for you, just as I had promised.'

"I had talked with Hunter about a burial at sea—it was one of the contrasts I had been waiting for. They had occurred often enough in my many crossings, but I, like the other passengers, was never informed; such sights are not proper on our side of the wall.

" 'What else did he say to you?' This question I addressed to the Second Engineer.

" 'Nothin'. I put him on; we ought to have six or eight more, but we couldn't get 'em—short now.'

" 'Did you find the letter?' I asked.

" 'No; Doctor did. He's got it now. He read it.'

" 'What did it say?'

" 'Well, near as I can remember, somethin' about his comin' home; a woman wrote it. He'll tell you when he comes back.'

" 'I'd like to see where he worked.' I was stretching the crack in my wall; peering into the next room, finding out how they lived and what on—all the things you should let alone, not being my business and the man being beyond hope.

" 'Take him down,' said Hunter, 'and show him the furnaces. Here, better peel off that coat and slip on my overalls and this jacket,' and he handed me the garments from a rack behind his door. 'Greasy down there; and look out for those ladders, they're almighty slippery when you ain't accustomed to 'em.'

" 'This way, sir,' said the Second Engineer.

"We made our way along a flat iron ledge —a grating, really, beneath which lunged huge pistons of steel—down vertical ladders into a cavern reeking with the smell of hot steam and dripping oil. All about were stars of electric light illumining the darkness, out of which stood strange shapes—a canebrake of steel rods, huge sawed-off roots of pillar-blocks, enormous cylinders rising up like giant trees from out a jungle of tangled steel. At the bottom of this morass a great boa constrictor of a shaft, smooth-skinned, glistening, turning lazily in its bed of grimy water, its head and tail lost in the gloom. Beyond this, along a narrow foot-path, a low open door leading to the mouth of hell. Here were men stripped to the waist, the sweat from their reeking bodies making flesh-colored channels down their blackened skins. Some were shielding their faces from the blistering heat as they wrenched apart the fusing fires with long steel bars; others dashed

into the mouths of a hungry furnace shovelfuls of coal, blinding the light for an instant, the white sulphurous breath pouring from its blazing nostrils. On one side before the row of hot-mouthed beasts opened a smaller cavern, its air choked with fine black dust; still other men shovelled here, filling iron barrows which they trundled out to more half-naked men before the scorching furnaces. A new gang now joined the group, men with clean faces and hands and half-scoured backs and breasts. This new gang had had a wash and four hours sleep in an air fouled by dust and dead steam. At sight of them the old workers dropped their bars and shovels, disappeared through the door by which we had entered, and rolled into bunks racked up one above the other like coffins in a catacomb.

"On one side of the door through which the new gang entered was an inscription in chalk. The leader of the gang stopped and examined it carefully.

" 'Clean stringers inside pocket,' the record said.

"The stringers were the cross-beams tying the ship together, about which the coal was packed; the pocket was one of the ship's bins. These instructions showed which death-pit was to be worked first.

"The Engineer made no explanatory remarks as I looked about. It was all there before me. The man with the letter had stood where these men stood; blistered by the same heat, befouled with the same grime, half strangled with the same coal-dust; had eaten his meals, drunk his coffee, staggered to his bunk, been carried insensible to the small square room on the deck above, laid on a cot, and was now dead and to be buried at midnight. That was all!

"Up the ladder again to a room the size of a state-room with the berths out. Inside, on a plank resting on two supports, lay

the crude, roughly hewn outline of a man wrapped in canvas, a flattened hump showing the feet and a round mass the head. Past this open door men walked carrying kettles of soup for the steerage. Outside in the corridor were heard sounds of hammering; the box was being made ready.

"Up a third ladder to Hunter's room. I stopped long enough to replace my coat and wash the grime from my hands and then sought the deck.

"She was still in her steamer chair, the roses in her lap. Not a cloud dimmed the sky; a soft, fresh, sweet air blew from the moonlit sea; the pathway of silver was still clear; souls could go to God straight up that ladder without missing a step, so bright was it. From the crowded deck came the sound of voices; some low and muffled, others breaking out into song and laughter.

" 'Where have you been?' she called out. 'What did the Engineer want? Tell me,

please; something had happened; I saw it in your face. Was anyone ill?'

" 'Yes; but he is better now,' and my eye travelled the pathway of silver.

" 'Oh, I am so sorry! Shall you see him again?'

" 'Yes, at twelve.'

" 'Tell me about it; can I help?'

" 'No.'

" 'Is anyone with him—anyone he loves?'

" 'No, he is quite alone.'

" 'Poor, poor fellow! Give him these, please,' and she laid the roses in my hand.

"Some hours later the messenger again tapped me on the shoulder.

" 'All ready, sir, Mr. Hunter says.'

"On the lower deck, close to the sea, a deck slashed with racing waves in a storm, were grouped a body of sailors and officers; all had their coats and caps on. Against the wall of the ship stood the Captain, an open book in his hand. Above his head flared a

bull's-eye backed by a ship's reflector, marking the high light in the composition. Beneath him, almost under the book, which cast a shadow like the outstretched wings of a bird, lay a black box, straight-sided and flat-topped. I edged my way through the encircling crowd and stood nearer, the roses in my hand.

"The words now fell clear and strong from the Captain's lips, every man uncovering his head.

" 'Man that is born of woman——'

"I reached down to lay the flowers on the lid—loose, as she had given them to me.

"Hunter tapped me on the arm. He was grave and dignified, and I thought his voice trembled as he spoke.

" 'Better twist a bit of tarred marlin round 'em, sir,' he whispered; 'he'll lose 'em if you don't. Hand me a piece'—this to a sailor. 'That's it, sir; a little tighter—so!'

" 'He cometh up and is cut down like a flower——'

"I bent over and laid the roses on the box. The men pressed closer to look. Roses, on a man like him!

"Again the Captain's reverent tones rang out:

" 'We therefore commit his body to the deep——'

"Two sailors stooped down and raised one end of the box. There came a grating sound, a splash, and the highway of silver was broken into steps of light.

"The Captain closed his book, the crowd opening to let him pass; the crew went back to their tasks—the sailor with tarred marlin to finish the bight of the cable he was whipping, the men to their furnaces, Hunter to his desk, I to where the girl reclined in her chair. She recognized my step and half raised herself toward me, as if eager to catch my first word.

" 'Did he like the roses?' she asked, her voice full of tenderness.

" 'Yes.'

" 'Where did you put them—by his bedside?'

" 'No, on his breast.'

" 'Poor fellow, I'm so sorry for him! Did you tell him I sent them?'

" 'He knows.'

" 'What did he say?'

" 'Nothing—but he will some day.'

"Her eyes widened.

" 'When? Where?'

" 'In heaven.'

"The eyelids relaxed again, and a smile lighted up her face. She saw now that I was not in earnest. Then a sudden thought possessed her.

" 'What is his name?' The inquiry came quick and sharp and with an anxious tone, as if she had been remiss in not asking before.

" 'He has none—not aboard ship.'

" 'Has no name! Why, I never heard of such a thing. How very strange!'

The men pressed closer to look. "Roses, on a man like him!"

" 'No, not among stokers; stokers never have any names. This one was called "Number Seven." ' "

Mac stopped and leaned toward the fire, his head in his hands, the fingers covering the eyes. Not once during the long narrative had he looked at me. He had been speaking like one in a trance, or as one speaks to himself when alone. That I had been present was of no consequence; I was no more than the portraits and studies on the walls, not so much as the andirons and the fire. That I had listened in complete silence was what pleased him. This, I think, is one reason why he so often unburdens his heart to me.

Mac straightened his back, rose to his feet and took a turn around the room, restlessly, as if the tale had stirred other memories which he was trying to banish; then he dropped again into his chair.

"That's what I mean by the other side of

the brick wall, old man. Makes your blood boil, doesn't it? Did mine."

"And the girl in the chair never knew?"

"No, and never will. He did; he looked back as he mounted the silver steps, and pointed her out to the angel helping him up the ladder. God knew what he had suffered, and wiped out whatever there was against him."

There was a tone now in Mac's voice that thrilled me. For a moment I did not trust myself to speak.

"And about the letter—did you read it?"

"Yes; it was from his wife. The Doctor gave it to me, and I hunted her up. Little place outside of London where they make bricks. Only two rooms; in one a half-starved daughter, white as chalk. She had sent for him, the wife said. Same old story—told a hundred times a day, if you will but listen with your ears to some wall. The steerage out to New York; the landing in a

strange city; the weary, hungry hunt for work; money gone, clothes gone, strength gone—then the inevitable. This one had made one last effort, even to giving his body to be burned. The white-faced daughter wanted to know, of course, all about it—they all want to know; but I didn't tell her—I lied! I said he had had heart failure, and that they had buried him at sea, and in a coffin like any other passenger, because we were only three days out; and I described the service and the roses, and how sorry the passengers were. She knows the truth now. *He's told her.*

"Go get your rose, old man. I ought to have had better sense than to rake it all up. No use in it. Not your side of the wall, not my side. Let me smell it. Yes, same perfume. Here, put it back in your buttonhole."

PART IV

With a Detailed Account of a Dangerous Footpad.

MAC had invited three or four of us to luncheon—Boggs, Lonnegan, Marny, and myself. These feasts were "Dutch" in the strictest sense, the sum total paid being divided, share and share alike, between the host of the day and his guests. That was the custom among the students in Munich and Paris, even at Florian's in Venice, and the custom was still observed. It did away with unpleasant comparisons—Lonnegan's inherited bank-account, for instance, and Woods's income from his rich aunt, who refused him nothing, in contrast to my own and Boggs's annual earnings. The only liberty given to the host of the day was the choice of restaurants. At Maroni's we could

get a hot sandwich and a glass of beer for fifteen cents; at Brown's, in Twenty-eighth Street, a chop, a baked potato, and a mug of bass for half of a trade dollar. When some one of the less opulent had sold a picture, and had become temporarily rich over and above the amount due for the month's rent, Lonnegan, or Woods, or Pitkin (Pitkin had a father who could cut off coupons) selected Delmonico's. These occasions were rare, and ever afterward became historic.

This day, it being Mac's turn, he selected Oscar Pusch's, on Fourth Avenue—a modest little beer-house near the corner of Twenty-fourth Street, its only distinguishing mark being a swinging, double shutter door and the advertisement of a brewery in the window. Inside was a long bar drenched with the foam of countless mugs of Hofbrau, facing a line of tables centred by cheap castors and dishes of cold slaw, and flanked at one end by a back room. This last apartment

was for the elect. One table was always reserved for the exalted; of this group MacWhirter was High Priest.

Here often at night Mac held forth to an admiring crowd of young painters who believed in his brush and who loved the man who wielded it. When I look back now down the vista of twenty years and see how fine and strong and superb that brush was, how true, how wonderful in color, how much better than any other painter of his time—Barbizon, London, or Dusseldorf—and think of how many lies the resident picture dealer told his patrons to discredit Mac's genius, I always experience a peculiar hotness under my collar-button. It cools off, it is true, whenever I see one of his masterpieces hung to-day on the walls of the redeemed. My anger then turns to a genial warmth, suffusing my cheeks and permeating my being, especially when I learn the sum paid for the smallest product of his brush.

"One of MacWhirter's, sir; one of his choicest; painted in his best period," says this same fraud to-day (the period, remember, when he would say, "What can one expect of the Hudson Rivery School, sir?"), and then the dealer demands a price which, had it been paid in Mac's earlier days, would have resulted in his breaking all students' rules and setting up Johannesburg of '41 instead of the simple steins of the Hofbrau with which Lonnegan, Boggs, and the rest of us were being regaled.

The hospitable and ever alert Oscar did not welcome us this time, but a new waiter, who sprang at Mac as if he had been his lost brother—a joyous sort of waiter, clean-shaven as a priest, ruddy-cheeked, blue-eyed, with short, tan-colored hair sticking straight up on his head, looking as if at some time in his life he had been frightened half out of his wits and had never been able to keep his hair down since.

The appearance of this overjoyed individual produced a peculiar effect on Mac.

"Oh, Mr. Pusch found a place for you at last, did he, Carl?" he burst out. "Glad you're here," and Mac stepped forward and shook the waiter's hand with more than his usual warmth.

Boggs looked at me and winked. What would Mac be doing next?

"Some member of the royal family, Mac?" asked Boggs, when the waiter had left the room to execute Mac's orders.

"No," said Mac, unfolding his napkin, "just plain man."

"I know," said Boggs, "ran off with a soprano at the Imperial Opera House; disinherited by his father; fought a duel with his Colonel on account of her; dismissed from his club; sought refuge in flight to God's free country, where for years he worked in a small café on Fourth Avenue. Was known for years as 'Carl' where——"

Mac raised his eyes at Boggs.

"Lively imagination you've got, Boggs. If I were you I——"

"On the death of his father, the late Baron Schweizerkase," continued Boggs in the nasal tone of an exhibitor of wax works, completely ignoring Mac's interruption, "the exile, who was none other than Prince Pumperknickel, returned to his estates, where his beautiful and accomplished wife, though not of royal blood, now dispenses the hospitality of his noble house with all the honors which——"

"Will you shut up, Boggs," cried Lonnegan. "Your tongue goes like an eight-day clock." Then he turned to Mac. "Seems to me I've seen that waiter before—last summer, if I remember. Where was it? Florian's or the Panthéon?"

"No, I don't think so," said Mac. "Carl hasn't been out of the country for two years to my knowledge. Much obliged, Oscar, for

giving him a place." This to the proprietor, who was now beaming across the bar at Mac. "You'll find Carl all right," and he nodded toward the waiter, who was again approaching the table.

"Everything suit you, Carl?"

"Oh, yes, yes, Mr. MacWhirter; I was comin' to see you about it, but I just got back from Philadelphy." The man seemed hardly able to keep his arms from around Mac's neck. I've seen a dog sometimes show that peculiar form of trembling joy when brought suddenly into his master's presence after a long absence, but never a man.

Marny now spoke up.

"Tell us about this waiter, Mac."

"There's nothing to tell; just one of my acquaintances, that's all. Some I bow to, some I shake hands with—Carl is one of the last," and Mac nodded and emptied his glass at a single draught, shutting off all discussion. No one knew better than Mac how to avoid

a subject on which he preferred to keep silence.

On the way back to the Old Building Marny and I walked together, Lonnegan, Mac, and Boggs behind.

"Something in that waiter Carl," remarked Marny, "or Mac wouldn't have shaken hands with him. These waiters are a queer lot; they're never in the same city more than a year. I drew my chair up to a table in Moscow two years ago in that swell café—forget the name—outside of a park, and sat me down, wondering which one of my ragged languages I could use in getting something to eat, when the waiter behind my chair leaned over and said in perfect English, 'What wine, Mr. Marny?' He'd waited at Brown's, on Twenty-eighth Street, for years. Hello! Who's Mac talking to?—a street beggar! Just like him!"

We were crossing the Square now and nearing the Old Building and No. 3. There

was evidently some dispute over the beggar, for Mac was apparently defending the woman, while the others were objecting to her asking for alms.

"They've got a password and a signal-call for Mac," continued Boggs; "he never goes to luncheon but there's half a dozen of 'em strung along his route."

We had now reached our companions.

"Did you give that tramp anything, Mac?" burst out Marny.

"Let not your right hand know what your left hand doeth, my boy," answered Mac, with a wave of his hand as he strode along.

"Did he, Lonnegan?" persisted Boggs.

"Yes, and wanted to know where she lived."

"I can tell you where she lives," exploded Boggs. "She lives in a brownstone front somewhere facing the Park. Drives up Riverside every Sunday in her carriage, and all because fools like you, Mac, support her.

Only last week a man I know gave some pennies to a woman who was crying with hunger, with two little babes to feed—'For the love of God, kind sir!' and all that sort of thing—and that night, going home from the club, he found her on a doorstep under a gaslight counting out her earnings—all the cents in one pile, all the dimes in another; then the quarters, halves, and so on. She'd earned more money that day than he had. When she saw him she laughed, and went right on with her counting."

Mac was now entering the Building, we following him upstairs, the discussion still going on. Lonnegan insisted that there were city charities that took care of such tramps; Boggs interrupted that they ought to be turned over to the police. Marny thought that there might be some of them deserving, but the chances were that the greater part of them were too lazy to work.

Our heads were now level with the top of

the Chinese screen, and the next instant the whole party were inside No. 3 and warming themselves at MacWhirter's wood fire.

Mac hung up his coat, threw some fresh logs on the andirons, swept up the hearth, and dragged up the chairs for his guests alongside of some of the other habitués—Charley Woods among them—who had already arrived and were awaiting our return.

"Mac's been doing the noble act again," Boggs burst out; "that's why we're late. Shook hands with a red-headed waiter named Carl down at Pusch's, who seemed glad enough to eat him up; then he emptied his pockets to a bag of bones outside with a basket—'God knows I haven't eaten anything, kind sir, for three days. Got three children' (Boggs's drawl was inimitable). You know that kind of hag. He would have invited her to dinner if we hadn't been along. If he wasn't a natural born fool with his

money it might do Mac some good to prove to him that——"

"You will get left every time, Mac," interrupted Woods from his chair, "over this foolishness of yours." It was never considered rude to interrupt Boggs—not even by Boggs. "Half of these beggars are dead beats. I've had some experience."

"Never 'left' when you're right, Woods," shouted back Mac, who had crossed the room to his basin and was busy washing his brushes.

"It's never 'right,' Mac, to allow yourself to be buncoed; and that's what happened to me last fall," retorted Woods.

Boggs leaned forward in his chair and fixed his eyes on Woods. The buncoing of Charles Wood, Esquire—a man who prided himself on knowing everything—was a story so delicious that not a word of it must be lost. The other men were of the same opinion, for they drew their chairs closer to the blaze, par-

ticularly those who had just come out of the keen wind in crossing the Square.

"You don't know, of course, for I have never told you," Woods continued, when every one was settled comfortably; "but when I was real pious—and I was once—I used to oblige my dear old aunt and go down to the Bowery and read to the tramps that were hived in a room rented by the church to which she belonged. I would give them short stories—touch of pathos, broad farce, or dramatic incident, whatever I thought would suit them best—from 'Charles O'Malley.' 'Boots at Holly Tree Inn,' and Hans Breitmann's yarns. I got along pretty well with the Irish, Dutch, and English dialects, but a new story just out at that time, 'That Lass o' Lowrie's,' in the Lancashire dialect, upset me completely. I didn't know how to read it properly, and I couldn't find anyone who could teach me. I tried it there one night, and after making a first-

class fizzle of it I suddenly thought that in an audience representing almost every nationality on the globe there might be someone from Lancashire, and so I stepped again to the edge of the platform, told them why I made the inquiry, and invited anyone from that part of England to stand up so that I could see and talk to him. Nobody moved, and I went away determined never to read the story again.

"The next day I was pegging away at my easel—it was when I had my studio over Duncan's grocery store on Fourteenth Street and Union Square, next to Quartley's and Sheldon's rooms—you remember it—when there came a rap at the door, and there stood a young fellow about twenty-five years of age, dressed in a shabby suit of once good clothes. Not a tramp; rather a good-looking, well-mannered man, who had evidently seen better days. I believe that you can always tell when a man has been a gentleman; there

is something about the cut of his jib that indicates his blood, no matter how low he may have fallen; something in the quality of his skin, the lines about his nose and the way it is fastened to his face; the way the hair grows on his temples, and its fineness; the rise of the forehead; and the ears—especially the ears—small, well-modelled ears are as true an indication of gentle blood as small, well-turned hands and feet. I have painted too many portraits not to have found this out. This fellow had all these marks.

"He had, moreover, a way of looking you right in the eye without flinching, following yours about like a searchlight without letting go of his hold. His voice, too, was the voice of a man of some refinement—a reed-like voice, like a clarionette, well-modulated, even musical at times, and with an intonation and accent which showed me at once that he was an Englishman.

" 'I heard what you said last night about

Not a tramp; rather a good-looking, well-mannered man, who had evidently seen better days.

the Lancashire dialect,' he began, 'but I didn't like to stand up to speak to you. I was afraid you might not be satisfied with what I could do for you. But I am in such straits to-day that I couldn't help coming, and so I asked the Superintendent for your address. I don't want any money, but I must have some food; if you will help me you will do a kind act. I am out of money, and I may never get any more from home, so that what you do for me I may not be able to repay. I haven't really had much to eat for nearly a week and my strength is giving out. I could hardly get up your stairs.'

"All this, remember, without giving me a chance to ask him a single question and without stopping to take breath—just as a book agent rattles on—he standing all the time on my door-sill, his hat in his hand, not as a beggar would carry it, but as some well-bred friend who had dropped in for an afternoon call. Good deal in the way a man holds his

hat, let me tell you, when you are sizing a stranger up. That's another one of my beliefs.

"I had brought him inside now and he was standing under my skylight, his face and figure making an even better impression on me than when he was in the dark of the doorway.

" 'And you speak the Lancashire dialect, of course?' I asked, my eyes now taking in the military curl of his mustache, his broad shoulders and the way his really fine head was set upon them.

" 'No,' he answered; 'to tell you the truth, I do not—not to be of any service to you. I know some words, of course, but not many. I ought to be able to speak it perfectly, for my father's place is in the next county; but I have been a good deal away from home. I didn't come for that; I came because you seemed to me last night to be the sort of a man I could talk to; I meet very few of

them; I don't like to stop people in the street, and my clothes now are not fit to enter anyone's office, and it would do no good if I did, for I know no one here.'

" 'Where have you lived?' I asked.

" 'Oh, all over; Australia part of the time, three years in Canada——'

" 'You don't look over twenty-five.'

"He dropped his eyes now and looked down at the floor.

" 'I wish I was,' he answered slowly; 'I might have done differently. You are wrong, I am thirty-one—will be my next birthday. I was home last summer to see my father, but I only stayed an hour with him. He wouldn't talk to me, so I left and came here.'

" 'Why not?'

" 'Well, I'd rather not go into that; it's a family matter.'

" 'Pretty rough, turning you out, wasn't it?' I was getting interested in him now.

" 'No, I can't say that it was. I hadn't

been square with him—not the year before.'

" 'Well, you were ready to do the decent thing then, I hope?'

" 'Yes, but my Governor is a peculiar sort of man that don't forget easily. But he's my father all the same, and so I'd rather keep away than have him hate me. No—please don't ask me anything about it. I don't think he was quite fair, but I'm not going to say so.'

"I had him in a chair now and had laid down my palette and brushes. When a man is thrown out into the world by his father and then refuses to abuse him, or let anybody else do so, there's something inside of him that you can build on.

"I handed him a greenback. 'Go down,' I said, 'on Sixth Avenue and get something to eat and anything else you need for your comfort, and then come back to me.'

"He folded the bill up carefully, put it in

his waistcoat pocket, thanked me in a simple, straightforward way, just as any of you would have done had I loaned you an equal amount to tide you over some temporary emergency, and with the bow of a thoroughbred closed my door behind him and went downstairs.

"While he was gone I began unconsciously to let my imagination loose on him. I immediately invested him with all the attributes I had failed to discover in him while he stood hat in hand under my skylight. Some young blood, no doubt, of good family, I said to myself; ran through his allowance, shipped off to Australia, returns and is forgiven. Then more debts, more escapades. Father a choleric old Britisher, who gets purple in the face when he is angry—'Out you go, you dog; never more shall you be son of mine!' You remember George Holland as an irate father of the old school?—same kind of an old sardine. No question, though, but

that his son was in hard lines and on the verge of suicide or, what was worse, crime.

"What, then, was my duty under the circumstances? What would my own Governor think of a man who had found me in a similar strait in London, penniless, half-clothed, and hungry, and who had turned me out again into the cold?

"Before I had decided what to do he was back again in my studio looking like a different man. Not only had he been fed, but he was clean-shaven and clean-collared.

" 'I took you at your word,' he said. 'I had a bath and bought me a clean collar. Here is the change,' and he handed me back some silver. 'I don't want to promise anything I can't do, and I don't say I'll pay it back, for I may not be able to, but I'll try my best to do so. Good-by, and thank you again.'

" 'Hold on,' I said. 'Sit down, and let me talk to you.' Now right here, gentlemen,

I want to tell you"—Woods swept his eye around the circle as he spoke, then rose to his feet as if to give greater emphasis to what he was about to say, his round bullet-head, eye-glasses, and immaculate shirt collar glistening in the overhead light—"I want to tell you right here that the buying of that clean collar and the return of the change settled the matter for me. I'm a student of human nature, as most of you know, and I have certain fixed rules to guide me which never fail. My duty was clear; I would play the Good Samaritan for all I was worth. I wouldn't cross over and ask him how the cripple was getting on; I'd walk down both sides of the street, call an ambulance, lift him in to a down-covered cot run on C springs, and trundle him off to flowery beds of ease or whatever else I could scrape up that was comforting. Now listen—and, Mac, I want you to take all this in, for I am telling this yarn for your special benefit.

"That same afternoon I took him up to my rooms—I was living with my aunt then up on Murray Hill—opened up my wardrobe, pulled out a shirt, underwear, socks, shoes, cut-away coat, waistcoat, and trousers; gave him a scarf, and then to add a touch to his whole get-up I picked a scarf-pin from my cushion and stuck it in myself. Next I handed him a cigar, opened up a bottle of Scotch, and after dinner—my aunt was dining out, and we had the table to ourselves—sat up with him till near midnight, he and I talking together like any other two men who had met for the first time and who had, to their delight, found something in common.

"Nor would any of you have known the difference had you happened to drop in upon us. No reference, of course, was made to his condition or to the way in which we had met. He was clean, well-dressed, well-mannered, perfectly at ease, and entirely at home. You could see that by the way in

which he shadowed his wine-glass as a sign to the waiter not to refill it; passed the end of his cigar toward me that I might snip it with the cutter attached to my watch-chain, having none of his own, of course—a fact he made no comment upon; did everything, in fact, down to the smallest detail (and I watched and studied him pretty closely) that any one of you would have done under similar circumstances; all of which proved his birth and breeding, and all of which, you will admit, no man not born to it can acquire and not be detected by one who knows.

"My idea was—and this is another one of my theories—that you can restore a man's energies only when you restore his self-respect, and I intended to prove my theory on this Englishman. What I was after was first to bring him back to his old self—he taking his place where he belonged, shutting out the hideous nightmare that was pursuing him—

and then get him a situation where he could be self-sustaining. This done, I proposed to write to his father and patch it up somehow between them, and the next time I went abroad we would go together and kill the fatted calf, haul in the Yule log, summon the tenants, build triumphal arches, and all that sort of thing.

"The following morning promptly at ten o'clock he rapped at my studio door. Pitkin saw him and thought he had come to buy out the studio, he was so well dressed—you remember him, Pit?"

Pitkin shook his head and smiled.

"Then commenced the hunt for work, and I tell you it was hard sledding; but I stuck at it, and at the end of the week old Porterfield gave him a position as entry clerk in his foreign department. During all that week he was spending his time between my studio and my aunt's, I looking after his expenditures—not much, only a few dollars a day.

Every evening we dined at home, and every evening we roamed the world: mountain climbing, pig sticking, pheasant shooting in Devonshire; who won the Derby, and why; English politics, English art, the tariff—every topic under the sun that I knew anything about and a lot I didn't, he leading or following in the talk, his eyes fixed on mine, his rich, musical voice filling the room, his handsome, well-bred body comfortably seated in my aunt's easiest chair.

"And now comes the most interesting part of this story. The afternoon before he was to present himself at Porterfield's, about five o'clock—an hour before I reached home—he rang my aunt's front-door bell; told the servant that I had been called suddenly out of town for the night and had sent him post haste in a cab for my portmanteau and overcoat. Then he tripped upstairs to my apartment, waited beside the servant until she had stowed away in my best Gladstone my dress-

suit, shirt with its links and pearl studs, collars—everything, even to my patent-leather shoes; and then, while she was out of the room in search of my overcoat, emptied into his pockets all my scarf-pins, my silver brandy-flask, and a lot of knick-knacks on my bureau, took the coat on his arm, preceded her leisurely downstairs, she carrying the bag, stepped into the cab, *and I haven't seen him since!*"

"There, Mac, that yarn is told for your especial benefit. What do you think of it?"

"I think you're all white, Woods, and I'm glad to know you," cried Mac as he grasped the painter's hand and shook it warmly.

"Yes, but what do you think of that cur of an Englishman?"

"I think he'll live to see the day he'll regret the mean trick he played you," answered Mac; "but that doesn't prove your contention that all beggars are frauds."

"Did you try to catch him?" interrupted Boggs.

"No, I was too hurt. I didn't mind the money or the clothes. What I minded was the way in which I had squandered my personality. The only thing I did do was to tell Captain Alec Williams of our precinct about him.

" 'Smooth-talking fellow?' Williams asked; 'had a scrap with his father? Light-blue eyes and a little turned-up mus-tache? Yes, I know him—slickest con' man in the business. We've got his mug in our collection; show it to you some day, if you come;' and *he did*."

"And the great reader of human nature didn't go to London and build arches and kill the fatted calf, after all," remarked Lonnegan, with a wink at Boggs.

"No," retorted Boggs; "he could have suicided himself at home with less trouble."

"Laugh on, you can't hurt me! I'm immune," said Woods. "I learned my lesson that time, and I've graduated. I'm not practising any theories, old or new; I'm doing missionary work instead, pointing out and running down dead beats wherever I see them. No more men's night meetings for me, no more widows with twins—no nothing. When I've got anything to give I hand it to my aunt. It isn't a pleasant yarn—it's one on me every time. I only told it to Mac so he could save his money."

"I'm saving it, Woods—save it every day; got a lot of small banks all over the place that pay me compound interest. Now I'll tell *you* a yarn, and I want you fellows to listen and keep still till I get through. If there's any doubts, Boggs, of your releasing your grasp on your talking machine, I'll take your remarks now. All right, enough said. Now hand me that tobacco, Lonnegan, and one of you fellows move back so I can get up closer,

where you can all hear. This story, remember, Woods, is for you."

When Mac talks we listen. The story, whatever it may be, always comes straight from his heart.

"One cold, snowy night—so cold, I remember, that I had to turn up my coat collar and stuff my handkerchief inside to keep out the driving sleet—I turned into Tenth Street out of Fifth Avenue on my way here. It was after midnight—nearly one o'clock, in fact—and with the exception of the policeman on our beat—and I had met him on the corner of the Avenue—I had not passed a single soul since I had left the club. When I got abreast of the long iron railing I caught sight of the figure of a man standing under the gaslight. He wore a long ulster, almost to his feet, and a slouch hat. At sound of my footsteps he shrank back out of the light and crouched close to the steps of one of those old houses this side of the long wall.

His movements did not interest me; waiting for somebody, I concluded, and doesn't want to be seen. Then the thought crossed my mind that it was a bad night to be out in, and that perhaps he might be suffering or drunk, a conclusion I at once abandoned when I remembered how warmly he was clad and how quickly he had sprung into the shadow of the steps when he heard my approach—all this, of course, as I was walking toward him. That I was in any danger of being robbed never crossed my mind. I never go armed, and never think of such things. It's the fellow who sees first who escapes, and up to this time I had watched his every move.

"When I got abreast of the steps he rose on his feet with a quick spring and stood before me.

" 'I'm hungry,' he said in a low, grating voice. 'Give me some money; I don't mean to hurt you, but give me some money, quick!'

"I threw up my hands to defend myself and backed to the lamp-post so that I could see where to hit him best, trying all the time to get a view of his face, which he still kept concealed by the brim of his slouch hat.

" 'That's not the way to ask for it,' I answered. I would have struck him then only for the tones of his voice, which seemed to carry a note of suffering which left me irresolute.

"He was edging nearer and nearer, with the movement of a prize-fighter trying to get in a telling blow, his long overcoat concealing the movements of his legs as thoroughly as his slouch hat did the features of his face. Two thoughts now flashed through my mind: Should I shout for the policeman, who could not yet be out of hearing, or should I land a blow under his chin and tumble him into the gutter.

"All this time he was muttering to himself: 'I'm crazy, I know, but I'm starving;

nobody listens to me. This man's got to listen to me or I'll kill him and take it away from him.'

"I had gathered myself together and was about to let drive when he grabbed me around the waist; we both slipped on the ice and fell to the pavement, he underneath and I on top. I had my knee on his chest now, and was trying to get my fingers into his shirt collar to choke the breath out of him, when the buttons on his ulster gave way. I let go my hold and sprang up. The man was naked to his shoes, except for a pair of ragged cotton drawers!

" 'Don't kill me,' he cried, 'don't kill me.' He was sobbing now, hat off, his face in the snow, all the fight out of him.

"I know a hungry man when I see him; been famished myself, wolfish and desperate once—and this man was hungry.

" 'Put on your hat, button up your coat,' I said, 'and come with me.' "

"Bully for you, Mac; that's the kind of talk," cried Boggs. "Waltzed him right down to the police station, didn't you?"

"No, I brought him to this very room, sat him down in that very chair where you sit, Boggs," answered Mac, "and before this very fire. He followed me like a homeless dog that you meet in the street, never speaking, keeping a few steps behind; waited until I had unlocked the street door, held it back for me to pass through; mounted the flight of steps behind me—the light is out, as you know, at that hour, and I had to scratch a match to find my way; remained motionless inside this room until I had turned on the gas, when I found him standing by that screen over there, a dazed expression on his face—like a man who had fallen overboard and been picked up by a passing ship.

"He had been discharged from his last place because some drunken young men had lost their money in a bar-room and had ac-

cused him of taking it. For some weeks he had slept in a ten-cent lodging-house. Two days before someone had stolen his clothes, all but his overcoat, which was over him. Since that time he had been walking around half-naked.

" 'Pull that coat off,' I said, 'and put on these,' and I handed him some underwear and a suit of sketching clothes that hung in my closet. 'And now drink this,' and I poured out a spoonful of whiskey—all he needed on an empty stomach.

"When he was warm and dry—this did not take many minutes—we started downstairs again and over to Sixth Avenue. Jerry's screens and blinds were shut, but his lights were still burning; some fellows were having a game of poker in the back room.

" 'Got anything to eat, Jerry?' I asked.

" 'Yes, Mr. MacWhirter; a cold ham and some hot chowder, if they ain't turned off the

steam. Pretty good chowder, too, this week. What'll it be—for one or two?'

" 'For one, Jerry.'

"I left him alone for a while sitting at one of Jerry's tables, his hungry, eager eyes watching every movement of the old man, as a starved cat watches the bowl of milk you are about to place before it.

"When he had devoured everything Jerry had given him, I moved to the bar, poured out half a glass of whiskey from one of Jerry's bottles, waited until he had swallowed it, and then sent him upstairs to sleep in one of Jerry's beds."

"And that was the last you ever saw of him, of course," broke out Woods, with a laugh.

"No; saw him every day for a month, till he got work. Saw him again to-day at Pusch's. He waited on us. It was Carl."

PART V

In which Boggs Becomes Dramatic and Relates a Tale of Blood.

MR. ALEXANDER MACWHIRTER'S great picture, "Early Morning on the East River," was still on his easel. The Hanging Committee had taken the outside measurement of the frame; had hung the other pictures up to the line of this measurement; had inserted the title and price in the official catalogue, and were then awaiting Mac's finishing touches.

MacWhirter had struck a snag in the middle distance, and until this was repainted to his satisfaction the picture would not leave his studio, official catalogue or no official catalogue.

On this afternoon Lonnegan was the first to arrive. The great architect on his way

downtown must have dropped in upon some social function, or was about to attend one later in the day, for he wore his morning frock-coat, white waistcoat, and a decoration in his button-hole—an unusual attire for Lonnegan unless the affair was of more than customary brilliancy and importance.

"Let up, Mac," cried Lonnegan from behind the Chinese screen, as he looked over its top; "the light's gone and you can't see what you're doing."

"I've got light enough to see where to put my foot," Mac shouted back.

"Easy, easy, old man! Don't smash it; masterpieces are rare! Let me have a look at it. Why, it's all right! What's the matter with it?"

"Shadow tones under the cliffs all out of key. There are a lot of wharves, sheds, and vessels lying there half-smothered in mist. I do not want to do more than suggest them, but they've got to be right."

"Well, but you can't see to paint any longer. Give it up until morning."

"Haven't got time! Hanging Committee has sent here three times to-day."

Marny, Pitkin, Boggs, and Woods walked in and joined the group about Mac's easel, a "sick picture" (pictures get ill and die, or recover and become famous, as well as men) being a matter of the very first importance.

Each new arrival had some advice to offer. Pitkin thought the sky reflections were not silvery enough. Woods wanted a touch of red somewhere on the sides or sterns of the boats, with a "click" of high light on their decks to relieve them from the haze of the background. "Right out of the tube, old man, and don't touch it afterward. It'll make it *sing!*" Boggs ignored all suggestions by saying, in a dictatorial tone:

"Don't you do anything of the kind, Mac; you don't want any drops of red sealing wax spilt on that middle distance, or any blobs of

white; only make it worse. All you need is a touch here and there of yellow-white against that purple haze. But you don't want to guess at it. This East River is a *fact*, not a *dream*. And it's right here under our eyes. Everybody knows it and everybody knows how it looks. If you want it true, the best thing for you to do is to go there tomorrow morning at daylight and wait until the sun gets to your angle. You fellows that insist on painting things out of your heads instead of following what is set down before you will run to seed like cabbages. Why you want to scoop up the emptyings of everybody's wash-basins, when it is so easy to get buckets of pure water fresh from nature's well, is what gets me."

"Talks like an art critic," growled Pitkin.

"And with as little sense," added Woods.

"More like a plumber, I should think," remarked Lonnegan drily. "Only don't you go up on that hill at five o'clock in the morn-

ing, Mac, or you'll never finish that picture or anything else. Some thug will finish *you*. That's the worst hole on the river—regular den of thieves live under that hill. I came near being murdered there myself once."

Lonnegan's statement caused a sensation.

"You came near being murdered, you dear Lonny?" Mac asked nervously.

"Yes."

"When?"

"Some three years ago."

Boggs, who was still smarting under the contempt with which his suggestion had been received, now shouted in the voice of a newsboy selling an afternoon edition:

"Full and graphic account of the hairbreadth escape of a great architect. Sit down, gentlemen, and listen to a tale that will clog your veins with dynamite and make goose shivers go up and down your spine. Here, Lonnegan, rest your immaculately up-

holstered body in this chair and tell us all about it. Put up your brushes, Mac; I'll help you wash 'em. Everybody draw up to the fire." (Here Boggs dropped into his own chair.) "The modern Moses is going to tell us how he was pulled out of the bulrushes and why he has an excuse for still walking around among his fellow-men instead of being tucked away in some comfortable cemetery on a hill under a mausoleum of his own designing.

"Ladies and gentlemen"—Boggs was again on his feet, a ring in his voice like that of a showman—"it is my especial privilege, and one of the greatest honors of my life, to introduce to you this afternoon the distinguished architect, Mr. Archibald Perkins Lonnegan, who——"

"Will you keep still!" cried Pitkin, putting both hands on Boggs's shoulder and forcing him into his chair. "Sit on him, Marny!"

Mac by this time had laid his palette on his painting table and had moved to the fire.

"You never told me anything about that, Lonny."

"Well, don't know that I did; 'twas some time ago."

"You're sure that you aren't really murdered, me long-lost che-ild?" whined Boggs in an anxious tone; these changes of manner, tone, and gesture of the Chronic Interrupter, —imitating in one sentence the newsboy, in another the showman, and now the anxious mother—were as much a part of his personality, and as much enjoyed by the coterie, despite their constant protests, as the bubbling good nature which inspired them.

"Feel that," said Lonnegan, tapping his biceps as he frowned at Boggs, "and you'll find out how much of a corpse I am."

Boggs plump fingers squeezed the corded muscles of the speaker with the dexterity of

a surgeon hunting for broken bones. Then he cast his eyes heavenward.

"Saved by a miracle, gentlemen. Thank God, he is still spared to us! Now go on, you fashion-plate! When, where, and in what part of your valuable and talented person were you almost murdered?"

Everybody was now seated and had his pipe filled, all except Lonnegan, who stood on the rug with his slender, well-built and, to-day, well-dressed body in silhouette against the blazing logs, his shapely legs forming an inverted V.

"This isn't much of a story. I wouldn't tell it at all if it wasn't to save Mac's life. There are two or three places under that East River hill where it is unsafe to walk even in broad daylight, let alone in the gray of the morning. When I tried it I was looking for one of my foremen—or, rather, for one of his derrick-men. I knew the street, but I didn't know the number. After din-

ner I started up Third Avenue, turned to Avenue A, and found that my only way to reach the place was down a long street leading to the river, flanked on each side by barren lots used as dumping-grounds and dotted here and there with squatters' shanties built of refuse timber, old tin roofs, and junk; gas lamps a block apart, with the sidewalks flagged only in the centre.

"I went myself because I wanted the derrick-man, and I wanted him at seven o'clock on Monday morning, and I knew he'd come if I could see him.

"Half-way down this long street, say two blocks from the avenue, which was brilliantly lighted and thronged with people—it was Saturday night—I saw the lights of a barroom, the only brick building fronting either side of the walk."

"Were you rigged out in this royal apparel, Lonny?" broke in Boggs.

"No; I was in a dress-suit and wore an

overcoat. Without thinking of the danger, I stepped inside and walked up to the barkeeper—a villainous-looking cutthroat, in his shirt sleeves.

" 'I am looking for a man by the name of Dennis McGrath,' I said; 'I thought some of you men might know him.'

"The fellow looked me all over, and then he called to two men sitting at the table behind the stove. As he spoke I caught the flash of a wink quivering on his eyelid—the lid farthest from me. Nothing uncovers the workings of a man's brain like a carefully concealed wink. It may mean anything from ridicule to murder.

"One of the men winked at got up from a table and approached the bar, followed by a larger man, with a face like a bull terrier.

" 'What yer say his name is—McGrath?'

"All this time his eyes were sizing me up, scrutinizing my hat, my shirt-studs, watch-chain, overcoat, gloves, down to my shoes.

The smaller man—'Shorty,' the barkeeper called him—now repeated the larger man's question.

" 'Did yer say his name's McGrath? What's he do?'

" 'He is a derrick-man.'

"Shorty was now well under the light of the bar. He had a scar over one damaged eye and a flattened nose, the same blow having evidently wrecked both; over the other was pulled a black cloth cap; around his throat was a dirty red handkerchief, no collar showing—a capital make-up for a stage villain, I thought, as I looked him over, especially the handkerchief. Even Mac here would look like a burglar with his hair mussed, collar off, and a red handkerchief tied around his throat.

"The barkeeper piped up again: 'Get a move on, Shorty, and help the gent find the Mick.'

" 'Shure! I know him. He's a-livin'

under de rocks. Come 'long, Boss. I'll git him.'

"Two more men stepped out of the gloom; one, in a cap and yellow overcoat, went behind the bar and slipped something into his pocket; then the two lounged out of the room and shut the door behind them. I began to take in the situation. The purpose of the wink was clear now. I was in a dive in a deserted street, unarmed and alone, and surrounded by cutthroats. If I tried to find McGrath with any one of these men as a guide I would be robbed and thrown over the cliff; if I attempted to go back I would land in the clutches of the man in the yellow overcoat and his companion. All this time the barkeeper was leaning over the bar, his eyes fixed on my face. My only hope lay in a bold front.

" 'All right,' I said to Shorty; 'how far is it?'

" 'Oh, not very fur—'bout t'ree blocks.'

"I stepped out into the night.

"Down the long street on the way to the river stood three men—the man in the yellow overcoat, his companion, and one other. They separated when they saw me, the one in the overcoat retracing his steps toward the dive without looking my way, the others sauntering on ahead. I walked on, meditating what to do next. I could throttle Shorty and take to my heels, but then I would have to reckon with the pickets who might be between me and the bar-room.

"Sometimes, when in great danger, a sudden inspiration comes to a man; mine came out of a clear sky.

" 'Hold on,' I said to Shorty—we were now half a block from the dive. 'Wait a minute; I have nothing smaller than a ten-dollar bill, and I want to give you something for your trouble. I'll run back and get the barkeeper to change it. Stay where you are; I won't be a minute.'

"I turned on my heel and walked back toward the dive with a quick step, as if I had forgotten something. The man with the yellow overcoat saw me coming and stepped into the street as if to intercept me. Shorty gave two low whistles, and the man stepped back to the sidewalk again. I reached the doorstep of the dive. All the men were now between me and the river, the one in the yellow overcoat but a short distance from the bar-room, Shorty waiting for me where I left him. With the same hurried movement I swung back the door, stepped inside, stripped off my overcoat, folded it close, threw it over my arm, and, before the barkeeper could realize what I was doing, pulled my hat close down to my ears, jerked the lapels of my dress-coat over my shirt-front to hide the white bosom, dashed out of the door and sprang for the middle of the street."

Here Lonnegan stopped and puffed away

at his pipe. For a minute every man kept still.

"Go on, Lonny," said Mac, the intensity of his interest apparent in the tones of his voice.

"That's all," said Lonnegan. "The change of coats and slight disguise of hat and lapels threw them off their guard. The outside pickets thought, when I burst through the door, that I was somebody else until I was too far away to be overtaken. That's what saved my life."

"And you call that an adventure, you fake!" cried Boggs. "Ran like a street dog, did you, and hid under your mammy's bed?"

"Well, what's the matter with the yarn," retorted Lonnegan; "it's true, isn't it?"

"Matter with it? Everything! No point to it, no common sense in it; just a fool yarn! You go out hunting trouble with your imagination on edge, like a scared child. You meet a man who offers to conduct you gra-

tuitously to a house up a back street; you agree to pay him for his trouble; you make a lame excuse to dodge him, he relying on your word to return, and then you take to your heels and cheat him out of his pay. No yarn at all; just a disgraceful bunco game!"

The Circle were now in an uproar of laughter, everybody talking at once. Marny finally got the floor.

"Boggs is right," he said, "about Lonnegan's conduct. It is extraordinary how low an honest man will sometimes stoop. Lonnegan's life among the aristocrats of Murray Hill is undermining his high sense of honor. Now I'll tell you a story of an escape that really has some point to it."

"Is this another fake murder yarn?" asked Boggs. "We don't want any more fizzles."

"Pretty close to the real thing—close enough to turn your hair gray. About fifteen years ago——"

"Now hold on, Marny," interrupted Boggs, "one thing more. Is this out of your head, like one of your muddy, woolly landscapes, or is it founded on fact?"

"It's founded on fact."

"Got any proof?"

"Yes, got the pistol that saved my life. It's on a shelf in my studio downstairs. If anybody doubts my story I'll bring it up. About twelve or fifteen years back——"

"He said *fifteen* a moment since," grumbled Boggs in an undertone to himself, "now he's qualifying it. First knock-down for the doubters. Go on."

"Well, say fifteen then; my memory is not good on dates; my brother and I made a trip to the Peaks of Otter, just over the North Carolina line. I was a boy of twenty and he was a man of thirty-two. He was a dead shot with a rifle or pistol and could knock a cent to pieces edgewise at fifty yards. While I painted, he scalped red squirrels and chip-

munks with a long Flobert pistol that carried a ball the size of a buckshot; a toy really, but true as a Winchester.

"We found the Peaks, or rather the peak we climbed, a sugar-loaf of a mountain with almost perpendicular slopes near its top, crowned by a cluster of enormous boulders. From its crest one can see all over that part of the State. Half-way up we stopped at a small tavern, inquired the way to the top, borrowed two small blankets of the landlord, and bought some cold meat and bread and a few teaspoonfuls of tea. These we put in a haversack, and leaving my heavy painting-trap we continued on about three o'clock in the afternoon to climb the peak. The only things we carried, outside of the provisions and blankets, were my pocket sketch-book and the Flobert pistol. It was the worst I have ever done in all my mountain climbing. Sometimes we edged along a precipice and sometimes we pulled ourselves up a cliff al-

most perpendicular. There was no doubt about the path—that was plainly marked by sign-boards and blazed trees and the wear of many feet, and then again it was perfectly plain that it was the only way up the mountain.

"We reached the top about sundown and found a cabin built of logs, with one window, a sawed pine door with a bolt inside, a rusty stove and pipe, and a low bed covered with dry straw. Scattered about were two or three wooden stools, and on the window-sill stood a tin coffee-pot and two tin cups.

"When it began to grow dark and the chill of the mountains had settled down, we started a fire in the stove, put on the pot, dumped in our tea, and began to spread out our provisions. Then we lighted one of the candles the inn people had given us, and ate our supper.

"About ten o'clock a puff of wind struck the stovepipe and scattered the ashes over the

floor. The next instant the growl of distant thunder reached our ears. Then a storm burst upon the mountains, the lightning striking all about us. This went on for two hours—after midnight really; we couldn't sleep, and we didn't try to. We just sat up and took it, expecting every minute that the shanty would be tumbled in on top of us. About one o'clock the rain slackened, the wind went down, and we could hear the growl of the thunder as the lightning played havoc on the peak to the north of us. Then we bolted the door to keep the wind from blowing it in should the storm return, rolled up in our blankets on our bed of straw and leaves, and fell asleep, leaving the matches close to the candle.

"We had hardly dropped off when we were awakened by a pounding at the door. In the dead of night, remember, on top of a mountain that a cat could hardly climb in the daytime, and after that storm!

"We both sprang up, scared out of our wits. Then we heard a man's voice, rough and coarse, and in a commanding tone:

" 'Open the door!'

"I was on my feet now. My brother caught up his pistol, slipped in a cartridge, and poured the balance of the ammunition into his side-pocket; then he called:

" 'Who are you?'

" 'Don't make any difference who we are,' came another voice, sharper and in a higher key. 'You don't own this shanty. Open the door, damn you, or we'll break it in!'

"We might have handled one man; two or more were out of the question. My brother stepped across the bed, backed into the shadow away from the rays of the flickering firelight, cocked the pistol, and nodded to me. I slipped back the bolt.

"Two men entered. One had a brown, bushy beard, a low forehead, and ugly, uncertain mouth. He was stockily built, with

stout legs and short, powerful arms and hands. The other was tall and lanky, with a hatchet face and cunning, searching eyes—eyes that looked at you and then looked away. He wore a slouch hat and homespun clothes and high boots, in which were stuffed the bottoms of his trousers. As he followed the shorter man inside the cabin he had to stoop to clear the top of the door-jamb.

"We saw that they were not mountaineers—their dress showed that; nor did they look like the men we had seen in the village. Both were drenched to the skin, the legs of their trousers and boots reeking with mud, the water still dripping from their hats.

"The shorter man looked at me and then ran his eye around the room.

" 'Where is the other one?' he asked in the same domineering tone.

" 'Here he is,' answered my brother coolly, from behind the bed.

"The two men peered into the shadow,

where my brother sat crouched with his back to the logs, the pistol on his knee within reach of his hand. From where I stood I could catch the red glint of the forelight flashing down its barrel. The men must have seen it too.

" 'We're goin' to chuck some wood in this 'ere stove. Got any objections?' asked the tall man, pulling his wet slouch hat from his head and beating the water out of it against the pile of firewood. The tone was a little less brutal.

" 'No,' answered my brother curtly.

"The tall one reached over the pile, picked up a log and shoved it in the stove. Then the two stretched themselves out at full length and looked steadily at the blaze, the steam from their wet clothes filling the room. No other word was passed, either by the men or by my brother or myself, nor did we change our positions. I sat on one of the stools and my brother sat in the corner where

he could draw a bead if either of the men showed fight. Three o'clock came, then four, then five, and then the cold gray light which tells of the coming dawn stole in between the cracks of the cabin and the broken window. At the first streak of light the tall man lifted himself to his feet, the short man followed, and swinging wide the door the two stalked out to the farthest edge of the pile of boulders overlooking the plain, where they squatted on their haunches, their eyes toward the east. We took our positions on a rock behind them, a little higher up. Any move they made would come under the fire of my brother's toy gun. The sun's disk rose slowly—first a peep of the old fellow's eye, then half his cheek, and then his round, jolly face wreathed in smiles. When the bottom edge of his chin had swung clear of the crest of the distant mountain range the tall man leaned over his companion and said in a decisive tone:

" 'Well, Bill, she's up,' and without a word

to either of us they swung themselves through the opening in the boulders and disappeared."

The coterie had listened in their usual absorbed way whenever Marny had the floor. His experience, like Mac's, covered half the world. Boggs had not taken his eyes from Marny's face during the entire recital.

"And that's all you know about them?" asked Lonnegan in a serious tone.

"Except what the landlord told us," continued Marny in answer, turning to Lonnegan. "The two men, he said, had stopped at the tavern about nine o'clock that night, had asked who was on top, and had hurried on; all they wanted was a stable lantern, which he lent them, and which they didn't return. He had never seen either of them before, and they didn't pass the tavern on their way back."

"What did you think of the affair?" asked Pitkin in a serious tone of voice.

"We had only two conclusions. They had either come to rob us, and were scared off by the toy pistol, or they were carrying out a wager of some kind."

"And it took you all night and the next day to find that out?" exclaimed Boggs in a tone of assumed contempt. "Really, gentlemen, this whole afternoon should go an record as the proceedings of a kindergarten. Just think what rot we've had: Lonnegan promises a poor workingman a job and takes to his heels to cheat him out of his pay; Marny, who, like Mac, poses as a philanthropist, and claims to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, refuses shelter to two half-drowned tourists who come up to see the sunrise, and instead of hustling round to get 'em hot tea and grub, he posts his big brother in a corner with a gun where he can blow the tops of their heads off. Rot—all of it! But what I object to most is the 'let-down' at the tag-end of each of these yarns. You work up to a

climax, and nothing happens. Just like one of these half-baked modern plays we've been having—all the climax in the first act, and a dreary drivel from that on till the curtain drops. I expected Marny's yarn would taper off in a hand-to-hand death struggle; both men thrown over the cliff; the finding of their mangled bodies, impaled on the trees, by the sheriff, who had tracked them for years, and who promptly identified both scoundrels, one as 'Dead House Dick' and the other as 'Murder Pete'; a vote of thanks to the two heroes by the State legislature, one of whom, thank God! is still with us"—and he bowed grandiloquently at Marny—"and a ring-down with a beautiful, unknown woman, supposed to be an heiress, creeping in at twilight to weep over their graves, all the stage lights turned down and a low tremolo going on in the orchestra. Tamest, deadest lot of twaddle I've heard around this fire! Now let me tell you a yarn that *means* something. Blood this

time—red blood. None of your dress-suit and warmed-up tea and toy-pistol adventures."

Everybody straightened up in his chair to get a better view of Boggs. The Chronic Interrupter was about to appear in a new rôle. The speaker opened his coat, tossed back the lapels as if to give his plump body more room, and rose slowly to his feet, his black diamond-pointed eyes glistening, his lips quivering with suppressed merriment. It was evident that Boggs was loaded to the muzzle; it was also evident, from the unusual earnestness of his manner, that he was about to fire off something of more than usual importance.

"No preliminaries, mind you. Right to the spot in a jump. This happened in Stamboul the winter I made those sketches of the mosques."

Mac looked up, an expression of surprise in his face. He thought he knew every act

of Boggs's life from his cradle up—they being bosom chums. That Boggs had even been in the East was news to him. Boggs caught the look and repeated his opening in a louder voice.

"In Stamboul, remember, across the Galata from Pera. I had finished the flight of marble steps and entrance of the Valedée, and was looking around for another subject, when a Turk with a green scarf around his fez (that showed he'd been to Mecca), who had been keeping off the crowd while I painted, offered to carry my trap to the Mosque of the Six Minarets up in the Plaza of the Hippodrome. A man who has been to Mecca is generally to be trusted, so I handed him my kit and followed his lead. On the way to the plaza he stopped beside a low wall and pointed to an opening in the ground. I looked down and saw a flight of stone steps.

" 'This is not for the Effendi to paint,' he said, 'but it is something for him to see. It

is the great underground cistern where the water was kept during the sieges.'

"That suited me to a dot—caverns always appeal to me—and down I went, followed by the green fez. Down, down, down, into a big vaulted chamber, the roof supported on marble columns running back into the gloom, only the nearby ones in relief where the light from the opening above fell upon their white shafts, very much as a forest looks at night when a torch is lighted. Stretching away was a dirt floor, uneven in places, and away back in the half-gloom I could make out the surface of a great pool. Now and then something would strike the water, the splash reverberating through the cavern.

"When my eyes became more accustomed to the darkness I could see men moving about, dragging ropes, and beyond these a dull light, like that from a grimy cellar window. This, the Turk said, was the other exit, the one nearest to the Mosque of the Six Minarets;

the men, he added, were rope-makers; some of them lived here and only left the cisterns at night, as the daylight blinded them. So I followed on, the Turk ahead, my kit in his hand.

"In the centre of the enormous cavern, half-way between the light of the street opening above the steps and the distant cellar-window light, I came to a circle of big stone columns standing close together, enclosing a space not much bigger than this room of Mac's. They were of marble and rather large for their height, although it was so dark that I could not see the roof distinctly. At this instant one of those indefinable chills, which with me always foretells danger, crept over me. I called to the Turk. There was no answer; only the sound of his feet, but quicker, as if he were running. Then a feeling took possession of me of someone following me—that's another one of my safeguards. I turned my head quickly and caught the edge

of a man's body as it dodged behind the column I had just passed. Then a head was thrust from around the column in front, then another on the side—rough looking brutes, bareheaded and frowzy. There was no question now—the Turk was their accomplice and had led me into this trap. These fellows meant business. Not backsheesh, but murder, and your body in the pool!" Here Boggs's manner became more serious. The suppressed smile had vanished.

"I was better built in those days than I am now," he continued in a graver tone; "not so fat, and could run like a sand-snipe, and it didn't take me long to decide what to do. To reach the staircase was my only hope.

"I whirled suddenly, struck the brute behind the rear column full in the face before he could raise his hands, sprang over his body, and ran with all my might toward the light at the foot of the staircase. If you thought you were running, Lonnegan, up that long

street, you should have seen me light out. It was a race for life over an uneven pavement, where I might stumble any moment, four men pursuing me, then three, then one. I could tell this from their footfalls. The light grew stronger; I turned my head for a second to size up my opponent. He was younger than the others, was naked to the waist, and wore only a pair of trunks. His bare feet made hardly a sound. I was within fifty yards now of the lower step, running like a deer, my wind almost gone. If I could reach that and bound up into the daylight, he would be afraid to follow. The light footfalls came closer; he was within twenty feet of me; I could hear his heavy breathing and smothered curses. My foot was now within a few feet of the steps; one spring and I would be safe. I put forth all my strength, miscalculated the bottom step, and fell headlong on the steps! The next instant his body struck mine with the impact of a tiger fall-

ing upon his prey, flattening me to the steps and grinding my lips into the sand covering the stones—I can taste it now. His fingers tightened about my throat. In my agony I braced myself and rolled over, partly throwing him off. Then my eyes lighted on a long curved knife with a turquoise-studded handle. A man notes these things in a moment like this. I minded even a spot of rust on the blade.

"Again his fingers tightened; my breath was going. That peculiar swelling of the tongue and dryness which sometimes comes with fever filled my mouth. The knife was now tightly gripped in his right hand, his fingers twisting my shirt collar into a tourniquet. I straightened my back, gathered all my strength, and lunged forward. The knife flashed, and then a horrible thing happened!"

Boggs stopped and began mopping his face with his handkerchief. The memory of the fight for his life seemed to have strangely

affected him. No one of the coterie had ever seen him so stirred, and no one had ever dreamed that he could tell a story with so much real dramatic power. In the few moments in which he had been speaking the room was almost breathless except for the tones of his voice.

"Go on, Boggs, don't stop!" said Lonnegan.

"In the struggle for mastery the point of the dagger pressed against my heart. There came a sudden lunge— Oh, I guess, boys, I won't go any further; I never like to think of the affair. I'd no business to tell it; always affects me this way."

"Yes, go on; served the brute right," spoke up Mac.

"I tried, of course, to avoid it, but I was powerless. The knife went straight through my own heart, and I fell dead at his feet. That afternoon they threw my body in the pool. I have lain there ever since."

Again his fingers tightened; my breath was going.

The listeners, one and all, glared at Boggs. The surprise had been so great that for an instant no one found his tongue. Then the fireside rang with shouts of laughter.

Lonnegan got his breath first.

"Boggs," he cried, "you are the most picturesque liar I know."

"Yes, Lonny, I guess that's so; but I gave you fellows a *thrill*, and that's what none of you gave me!"

PART VI

Wherein Mac Dilates on the Human Side of "His Worship, the Chief Justice," and his Fellow Dogs.

THE group about the blazing logs was enriched this afternoon by a new member. Lonnegan had brought his dog, a big white and yellow St. Bernard, fluffy as a girl's muff, a huge, splendid fellow, who answered with great dignity and with considerable condescension to the name of "Chief," an abbreviation of "His Worship, the Chief Justice."

No other name would have suited him. Grave, dignified, wide-browed, with deep, thoughtful eyes; ponderous of form, slow in his movements, keeping perfectly still minutes at a time, he needed only a wig and a pair of

big-bowed spectacles to make him the fitting occupant of any bench.

Mac put his arm around Chief's neck before His Worship had fully made up his mind as to where on the Daghestan rug he would place his august person.

The salutation over, and the dog's soft, fur-tippet ears having been duly rubbed, and his finely modelled cheeks pressed close between Mac's two warm hands—their two noses were but an inch apart—His Worship stretched himself out at full length before the fire, his nose resting on his extended paws, his kindly, human eyes fixed on the crackling logs.

"Lonnegan," said Mac in a thoughtful tone, "do you know I think a good deal more of you since you got this dog? I didn't know you were that human," and Mac changed his seat so that he could rest his hand on Chief's head.

"Lonnegan hasn't anything human about him," broke in Boggs, tugging at his collar

to give his fat throat the more room; "not in your sense, Mac. If you will study the Great Architect as closely as I have done, you will see that his humanity is to always keep one point ahead of the social game." Here Boggs got up and moved his chair to the other side of the fireplace, so as to be out of reach of Lonnegan's long arms.

"Let me explain, gentlemen, for I don't want to do this distinguished man any injustice. You and I, Mac, being common-sense people, without any frills about us, wear just an ordinary plain scarf-pin—a horseshoe or a gold ball, or some such trifle. Lonnegan must have a scarab, or a coin two thousand years old; same thing in his dress, if you study him. You will note that his collars are an inch higher than ours, his scarfs twice as puffy, his coat-tails longer, his trouserloons more baggy —not offensively baggy, gentlemen," and he waved his hand to the coterie; "perhaps more unique in cut, so to put it. So it is with

his dogs. This big St. Bernard, hulking along after the Great Architect when he takes his afternoon walks up and down the Avenue, is quite on a par with all Lonnegan's other frills. You and I would affect an inconspicuous canine—a poodle, a terrier, or a bull pup. Not so Lonnegan. He wants a dog as big as a mule. It's a better advertisement than two columns in a morning paper. 'My dear,' says a stout lady, built in two movements, to her husband at a theatre" (Boggs's imitation of a society woman's drawl was now inimitable), " 'I saw such a magnificent St. Bernard coming up the Avenue. Belongs to Mr. Lonnegan, the architect. He certainly is a man of very exquisite taste. I think it would be a good idea for you to consult him about the plans for our——' "

Lonnegan sprang from his seat and made a lunge at his tormentor with a look in his eyes as if he intended to throttle Boggs on the spot. At the same instant the great

dog drew in his paws and rose to his feet, his eyes fixed on his master's movements—rose as an athlete rises, using the muscles of his knees and ankles to pull his body erect. If his master was in danger he was ready. Only smothered laughter, however, came from both Boggs and Lonnegan.

"I take it all back, Lonny," sputtered Boggs, trying to release himself from Lonnegan's grip. "The woman's husband wanted two country houses, not one. Call off your dog, I can't fight two brutes at once."

Pitkin sprang to his feet, his partly bald head and forehead rose-pink in the excitement of the moment.

"Don't call your dog off, Lonny! Don't move. Keep on choking Boggs. Just look at the pose of that dog. Isn't that stunning. By Jove, fellows! wouldn't he be a corker in bronze, life size. Just see the line of the back and lift of the head!" And the sculptor, after the manner of his guild, held the edge of his

"It's a better advertisement than two columns in a morning paper"

hand against his eye as a guide by which to measure the proportions of the noble beast.

Lonnegan loosened his hold, and Boggs, now purple in the face from loss of breath and laughter, shook himself free and rearranged his collar with his fat fingers. The attention of the whole fireside was now centred on the dog. His pose was now less tense and his legs less rigid, but his paws had kept their original position on the rug. As he stood, trying to comprehend the situation, he had the bearing of a charger overlooking a battle-field.

"No, you're wrong, Pitkin," cried Marny; "Chief would be lumpy and inexpressive in bronze. He's too woolly. You want clear-cut anatomy when you're going to put a dog or any other animal in bronze. Color is better for Chief. I'd use him as a foil to a half-nude, life-size scheme of brown, yellow, and white; old Chinese jar on her left, filled with chrysanthemums, some stuffs in the back-

ground—this kind of thing. I can see it now," and Marny picked up a bit of charcoal and blocked in on a fresh canvas resting on Mac's easel the position of the figure, the men crowding about him to watch the result.

"Won't do, old man," cried Woods, as soon as Marny's rapid outline became clear. "Out of scale; all dog and no girl. I'd have him stretched out as he is now" (Chief had regained his position), "with a fellow in a chair reading—lamplight on book for high light, dog in half shadow."

"You're quite right, Woods," said Mac, who was still caressing Chief's silky ears. "Marny's missed it this time; girl scheme won't do. This is a gentleman's dog, and he has always moved among his kind."

"Careful, Mac; careful," remarked Boggs in a reproving tone. "You said '*has* moved.' You don't mean to reflect on his present owner, do you?"

Mac waved Boggs away with the same gesture with which he would have brushed off a fly, and continued:

"When I say that he has always lived among *gentlemen*, I state the exact fact. You can see that in his manners and in the way in which he retains not only his self-respect, but his courage and loyalty. You noticed, did you not, that it took him but an instant to get on his feet when Lonnegan seized Boggs? You will also agree with me that no one has entered this room this winter more gracefully, or with more ease and composure, nor one who has known better what to do with his arms and legs. And as for his well-bred reticence, he has yet to open his mouth—certainly a great rebuke to Boggs, if he did but know it," and he nodded in the direction of the Chronic Interrupter. "Great study, these dogs. Chief has had a gentleman for a master, I tell you, and has lived in a gentleman's house, accustomed all his life to

oriental rugs, wood fires, four-in-hands, two-wheeled carts, golden-haired children in black velvet suits, servants in livery—regular thoroughbred. That is, *bred thorough*, by somebody who never insulted him, who never misunderstood him, and who never mortified him. Offending a dog is as bad as offending a child, and ten times worse than offending a woman. A dozen men would spring to a woman's assistance; no one ever interferes in a quarrel between a dog and his master. When they do they generally take the master's side."

Mac reached over, tapped the bowl of his pipe against the brick of the fireplace, emptied it of its ashes, and laying it on the mantel resumed his seat.

"It's pathetic to me," he continued, "to see how hard some dogs try to understand their masters. All they can do is to take their cue from the men who own them. It isn't astonishing, really, that they should some-

times copy them. It only takes a few months for a butcher to make his dog as bloody and as brutal as the toughest hand in his shop."

"What a responsibility," sighed Boggs, turning toward Lonnegan. "You won't corrupt His Worship with any of your Murray Hill swaggerdoms, will you, Lonny?"

Lonnegan closed one eye at Boggs and wagged his chin in denial. Mac went on:

"Dogs can just as well be educated up as educated down. There is no question of their ability to learn—not the slightest. I am not speaking of the things they are expected to know—hunting, rat catching, and so on; I mean the things they are *not* expected to know. If you'd like to hear how they can understand each other, get the Colonel to tell you about those two dogs he saw in Constantinople some two years ago," and he turned to me.

"It wasn't in Constantinople, Mac," I an-

swered, "it was in Stamboul, on the Plaza of the Hippodrome."

"Near where I was murdered, and where I still lie buried?" Boggs asked gravely, with a sly wink at Marny.

"Yes, within a stone's throw of your present tomb, old man, up near the Obelisk. That plaza is the home of four or five packs of street curs, who divide up the territory among themselves, and no dog dares cross the imaginary line without getting into trouble. Every day or so there is a pitched battle directed by their leaders—always the biggest dogs in the pack. What Mac refers to occurred some years ago, when, looking over my easel one morning, I saw a lame dog skulking along by the side of a low wall that forms the boundary of one side of the plaza. He was on three legs, the other held up in the air. A big shaggy brute, the leader of another pack, made straight for him, followed by three others. The cripple saw them

coming, and at once lay down on his back, his injured paw thrust up. The big dog stood over him and heard what he had to say. I was not ten feet from them, and I understood every word.

" 'I am lame, gentlemen, as you see,' he pleaded, 'and I am on my way home. I am in too much pain to walk around the side of the plaza where I belong, and I therefore humbly beg your permission to cross this small part of your territory.'

"The big leader listened, snarled at his companions who were standing by ready to help tear the intruder to pieces, sent them back to their quarters with a commanding toss of his head, and walked by the side of the cripple until he had cleared the corner; then he slowly returned to his pack. There was no question about it; if the cripple had spoken English I could not have understood him better."

"I can beat that yarn," chimed in Woods,

"so far as sympathy is concerned. I was in an omnibus once going up the Boulevard des Italiennes when a man on the seat opposite me whistled out of the end window—his two dogs were following behind the 'bus. One was a white bull terrier, the other a French poodle, black as tar. Whenever anything got in the way—and it was pretty crowded along there—the dogs fell behind. When they appeared again the owner would whistle to let them know where he was. All of a sudden I heard a yell. The poodle had been run over. I could see him lying flat on the asphalt, kicking. The man stopped the omnibus and sprang out, and a crowd gathered. In that short space of time the terrier had fastened his teeth in the poodle's collar, had dragged him clear of the traffic to the sidewalk, and was bending over him licking the hurt. Four or five people got out of the stage, I among them, and a cheer went up for the owner when he picked up the injured

dog in his arms and took him clear of the crowd, the terrier following behind, as anxious as a mother over her child. I have believed in the sympathy of dogs for each other ever since."

"My turn now," said Boggs. "My uncle's got a poodle, answers to the name of Mirza. Got more common sense than anything that walks on four legs. They keep a bowl in one corner of the dining-room, which is always filled with water so the dog can get a drink when she wants it. My uncle says that's one thing half the people who own dogs never think of—dogs not being able to turn faucets. Well, they shifted servants one day and forgot to tell the new one about the bowl. Mirza did her best to make her understand —pulled her dress, got up on her hind legs and sniffed around the empty tea-cups. No use. Then an idea struck the dog. She made a spring for the empty bowl and rolled it over with her four paws from the dining-

room into the butler's pantry. By that time the wooden-headed idiot understood, and Mirza got her drink."

During the discussion Mac had sat with the great head of the St. Bernard resting on his knee. It was evident that His Worship had found an acquaintance whom he could trust, one whom he considered his equal. For some minutes the painter looked into the dog's face, his hands smoothing the dog's ears, the St. Bernard's eyes growing sleepy under the caress. Then Mac said in a half-audible tone, speaking to the dog, not to us:

"You've got a great head, old fellow—full of sense. All your bumps are in the right place. You know a lot of things that are too much for us humans. I wish you'd tell me one thing. You know what we all think of you, but what do you think of us—of your master Lonnegan, of this crowd, this fire-place? Speak out, old man; I'd like to know."

Boggs shifted his fat body in his chair, jerked his head over his shoulder, and winking meaningly at Lonnegan, said in a low voice:

"Mac is going to give us one of his reminuisances; I know the sign."

"Make the dog begin on Boggs, Mac," cried Woods.

"No, Chief's too much of a gentleman. He knows all about Boggs, but he's too polite to tell," replied Mac.

"Get him to whisper it then in your off ear," suggested Boggs. "He'll surprise you with his estimate of one of nature's noblemen," and he thrust his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat.

"No, keep it to yourself, Chief," remarked Mac. "But I'm not joking, I'm in dead earnest. Anybody can find out what a man thinks of a dog; but what does a dog think of a man, especially some of those two-legged brutes who by right of dollars claim to own

them? I took the measure of a man once who——"

Boggs sprang from his seat and struck one of his ring-master attitudes.

"What did I tell you, gentlemen? Just as I expected, the semi-nuisance has arrived. Give him room! The great landscape painter is about to explode with another tale of his youth. You took the measure of a man once, I think you said, Mac; was it for a suit of clothes or a coffin? No, don't answer; keep right on."

"Yes, I did take his measure," said Mac, in a low, earnest tone, ignoring Boggs's aside; "and I've never taken any stock in him since. I don't think any of you know him, and it's just as well that you don't. I may be a little Quixotic about these things—guess I am—but I'm going to stay so. I met this Quarterman —that's more than he deserves; he's nearer one-eighth of a man than a quarter—up at the club-house on Salt Beach. I was a guest;

he was a member. Big, heavily built young fellow; weighed about two hundred pounds; rather good-looking; wore the best of English shooting togs; carried an English gun and carted around a lot of English leather cases, bound in brass, with his name plate on them. A regular out-and-out sport of the better type, I thought, when I first saw him. He had with him one of the most beautiful reddish-brown setters I ever laid my eyes on —what you'd get with burnt sienna and madder—with a coat as fine and silky as a camel's hair brush. One of those clean-mouthed, clean-toothed, agate-eyed, sweet-breathed dogs that every girl loves at first sight, and can no more help putting her hands on than she can help coddling a roly-poly kitten just out of a basket. He had the same well-bred manners that Chief has, the same grace of movement, same repose, only more gentle and more confiding. The only thing that struck me as peculiar about him was the

way he watched his master; he seemed to love him and yet to be afraid of him; always ready to bound out of his way and yet equally ready to come when he was called—a manner which he never showed to anyone who tried to make friends with him.

"I saw Quarterman that morning when he started out alone quail shooting, the setter bounding before him, running up and springing at him, and off again—doing all the things a human dog does to tell a man how happy he is to go along, and what a lot of fun the two are going to have together. I watched them until they got clear of the marshes and disappeared in the woods on the way to the open country beyond. All that day the picture of the well-equipped, alert young fellow and the spring of the joyous setter kept coming to my mind. I don't believe in killing things, as you know (so I don't shoot), but I thought if I did I'd just like to have a dog like that one to show me how.

"About six o'clock that night the two returned. I was sitting by the wood fire—a good deal bigger than this one, the logs nearly six feet long—when the outer door was swung back and Quarterman came in, his boots covered with mud, his bird-bag over his shoulder. The setter followed close at his heels, his beautiful brown coat covered with burrs and dirt. Both man and dog had had a hard day's work and a poor one, judging from the bird-bag which hung almost flat against Quarterman's shoulder.

"Everybody pushed back his chair to make room for the tired-out sportsman.

" 'What luck?' cried out half-a-dozen men at once.

"Quarterman, without answering, stopped in the middle of the room some distance from the fire, laid his gun on the table, reached around for his bird-bag, thrust in his hand, drew out a small quail —all he had shot—and threw it with all his might against the

wall of the fireplace, where it dropped into the ashes—threw it as a boy would throw a brick against a fence. Then with a vicious hind thrust of his boot he kicked the setter in the face. The dog gave a cry of pain and crawled under the table and out of the room.

"'What luck!' growled Quarterman. 'Footed it fifteen miles clear to Pottsburg, and that damned dog scared up every bird before I could get a shot at it!' and without another word he mounted the stairs to his room.

"His opinion of the dog was now common property. If any man who had heard it disagreed with him, he kept his opinion to himself. But what I wanted to know was what the setter thought of Quarterman? He had followed him all day through swamps and briars; had run, jumped, crept on his belly, sniffed, scented, and nosed into every tuft of grass and brush-heap where a quail could hide itself; had walked miles to the man's one, leaped fences, scoured hills,

raced down country roads and over ditches, had pointed and flushed a dozen birds the brute couldn't hit, and after doing his level best had come back to the club-house expecting to get a warm corner and a hot supper—his right as well as Quarterman's—and instead got a kick in the face.

"I ask you now, what did the dog think of him? I was so mad I had to go outside and let off steam myself. I was half Quarterman's weight and ten years his senior, but if he had stayed five minutes longer by that fire I am quite sure I should have told him what I thought of him."

"I bet you told the dog, didn't you, Mac?" remarked Lonnegan.

"Yes, I did. Gave him a hug, and hunted up the cook and saw he was fed. He tried to tell me all about it, putting out his paw and drawing it in again, looking up into my face with his big eyes—tears in 'em, I tell you—real tears! Not so much from the hurt

as from the mortification. I understood then his shrinking away from his master. It hadn't been the first time he had been humiliated and hurt. Dirty brute! If I knew where he was I think I'd go and thrash him now."

The coterie broke out into a laugh over Mac's indignation, but a laugh in which there was more love than ridicule.

"Yes, I would; I feel like it this minute. But I tell you the setter got his revenge; a revenge that showed his blood and breeding; the revenge of a gentleman.

"Back of the club-house was a swampy place where some cranberry raisers had dug holes and squares trying to get something to grow, and back of this was another swamp perhaps a mile or two wide. Ugly place—full of suck-holes, twisted briars, and vines—where they told Quarterman he could get some woodcock or snipe or whatever you do get in a marsh. The setter rose to his feet to ac-

company him (this was two days later) but was met with, 'Go back, damn you!' Followed by an aside, 'What that fool dog wants is a dose of buckshot, and he'll get it if he ain't careful.'

"That day I had been off sketching and did not get back until nearly dark. There were only two other men left besides myself and Quarterman, most of the others having gone to town. When dinner was served the steward went upstairs expecting to find Quarterman asleep on his bed. No Quarterman! Then he began to inquire around. He had not been back to luncheon, and no one had seen him since he went off in the morning heading for the cranberry swamp. The setter was still outside on the porch, where he had lain all day, foot-sore and worn out, the men said, with his hunt the day before. I made no reply to this, but I thought differently. Eight o'clock came, then nine, and still no sign of Quarterman. One of the club

servants suggested that something must have happened to him. 'Never Mr. Quarterman's way,' he added, 'to be out after sundown, in all the five years he had been a member of the club. He certainly would not go to the city in his shooting clothes, and he hadn't changed them, for the suit he had worn down from town still hung in his closet.' At ten o'clock we got uneasy and started out to look for him, a party of three, the two servants carrying stable lanterns. The setter again rose to his feet, wondering what was up, and was again rebuffed, this time by the steward.

"We soon found that fooling around a swamp of a dark night, with your eyes blinded by a lantern, was no joke. Every other step we took we fell into holes or got tripped up by briars. We stumbled on, skirting by the edge of the cranberry patch, hollering as loud as we could; stopping to listen; then going on again. We tried the other big swamp, but that was impossible in the dark.

Then an idea popped into my head. I gave the lantern I was carrying to one of the men, hollered to the others to stay where they were till I got back, cleared the cranberry patch, struck out for the club-house on a run, sprang upstairs, grabbed Quarterman's coat hanging in the closet, ran downstairs again, and shoved it under the nose of the setter. Then I told him all about it, just as I'd tell you. Quarterman was lost—he was in the swamp, perhaps; where, we didn't know—and he was the only one who could find him. Would he go? *Go!* You just ought to have seen him! He threw his nose up in the air, sniffed around as though he were looking for gnats to bite; made a spring from the porch and began circling the lawn, his nose to the ground and sand; then he made a bound over the fence and disappeared in the night.

"I hollered for the others and we kept after the setter as best we could. Every now and then he would give a short bark—some-

times far away, sometimes nearer. All we could do was to skirt along the edge of the cranberry patch swinging the lanterns and hollering, 'Quarterman! Quarterman!' until our throats gave out.

"Then I heard a quick, sharp bark, followed by a series of short yelps, not fifty yards away. Next there came a faint halloo, a man's voice. We pushed on, and there, about ten yards from hard ground, we found Quarterman stretched out, the setter squatting beside him. He had slipped into a hole some hours before, had broken his ankle, and had made up his mind to wait until daylight, the pain, every time he moved, almost making him faint. He was soaked to the skin and shivering with cold. We helped him up on one foot, carried him to dry land, and finally got him home; the dog following at a respectful distance.

"After we had put Quarterman to bed and had sent a man off on horseback to Pottsburg

for a doctor, I looked up the setter. He was in his old place on the porch, stretched out under one of the wooden benches, his nose resting on his paws—just as Chief lies here now—thinking the whole situation over. He raised his head for an instant, licked my hand and looked up inquiringly into my face as if expecting some further service might be required of him; then he dropped his head again and kept on thinking. Nobody had bothered himself about him; they hadn't even thanked him in their hearts. Nothing to thank him for. Childish to think of it! All the setter had done was just being plain dog. Hunting up things was what he was born for.

"Next morning the dog turned up missing. Quarterman raised himself up on his elbow when he heard the news and said he must be found at any cost; he was worth five hundred dollars. The men started out, of course; searched the stables, boat-houses, swamp, and fields clear down to the water's edge; whistled

and called; did all the things you do when a dog is lost—but no setter. Everybody wondered why he ran away. Some said one thing, some another. I knew why. *He had gone off in search of a gentleman.*"

"Did Quarterman get well?" ventured Lonnegan.

"I don't know and I don't care. I left the next morning."

"Did Quarterman get his dog back?" asked Boggs.

"Not while I was there. I could have told him where to look for him, but I didn't. I saw him on a porch with some children about a week after that, when I was driving through a neighboring village—but I didn't send word to Quarterman. I had too much respect for the dog.

"Come here, old fellow," and Mac took the great head of the St. Bernard between his warm hands and the two snuggled their cheeks together.

PART VII

Containing Mr. Alexander MacWhirter's Views on Lord Ponsonby, Major Yancey, and their Kind.

WHEN I entered No. 3 to-day Mac was struggling with a small upright piano. He and Marny had rolled it out of Wharton's room at the end of the corridor, and the two had guided it between the open door and the screen of No. 3 and were now whirling it into the corner occupied by Mac's easel.

This done, the two began to make ready for the evening's entertainment. The big divan where Mac slept was dragged from its shelter, covered with a rug, and placed against the wall facing the fireplace; the table was stripped of its junk (there is no other word for the miscellaneous collec-

tion of sketches, books, curios, matches, brushes, tubes of color, half-used bottles of siccative and the like, which always litters the table's surface), wiped clean, and placed at right angles with the divan; all the uncomfortable chairs moved out of sight; a stool backed up under the window to hold a keg of ice-cool beer, to be brought in later and wreathed with green; new and old mugs —those of the regular members, and brand new ones for the invited guests—lined up on the cleared table: all these shiftings, strippings, and refittings being especially designed for the comfort of a chosen few, who on these rare nights (only once a year) were admitted into the charmed half-circle that curved about the wood fire in No. 3.

These complete, Mac turned his attention to the lesser details: the stacking up of a pile of wood so that the rattling old fire would have logs enough with which to warm the latest guests, new or old, no matter how late

they stayed; the hearth swept—all its "dear gray hair combed back from its rosy face with a broom" Mac used to call this process; the Chinese screen drawn the closer to keep out the wandering drafts; candles lighted in the old sconces, ancient candlesticks, and grimy Dutch lanterns; and last—and this he attended to himself—every vestige of the work of his own brush tucked out of sight so that not even Boggs could find one. There were strangers coming to-night—one a partner in a big banking house and a suspected buyer—and no canvas of his must be visible.

With the arrival of the keg of "special brew," carried on the shoulders of a big German from the street to the fifth floor without a pause, where it was propped up on the wooden stool and steadied by a stick of kindling wood, Mac opened the window of his studio and took from its sill a paper box filled with smilax—his own touch in remem-

brance of his Munich days. This he wound around the body of the cool keg with the enthusiasm of a virgin of old twisting garlands about the neck of a sacred bull. Loyalty to just such ideals is part of Mac's religion.

Pitkin arrived first, bringing with him the much-dreaded banker from whom Mac had hidden his pictures. The sculptor was at work on a bust of the rich man's wife, and the paymaster had begged so hard to be admitted into the charmed circle that Pitkin had singled him out as his guest. Not that there was any valid reason why he or anyone else should be debarred its comforts, except upon the ground of uncongeniality. The habitués of this particular half-circle never tolerated (to quote Mac) the mixing of water and oil on their palettes.

Then came Boggs with an Irish journalist by the name of Murphy, a stockily built, round-headed man in gold spectacles; followed by Woods, who brought a friend of

his, an inventor; Marny with another friend from the club, and last of all Lonnegan, with his big dog Chief.

Each guest had been welcomed by Mac in his hearty way and duly presented to the stranger, whosoever he might be, and each man had responded according to his type and personality. The banker had returned Mac's grasp with a deference never extended by him, so Pitkin thought, to any financial magnate; the inventor had at once launched out into a description of his more recent experiments; the club man had said the proper thing, and immediately thereafter had busied himself making a mental inventory of the comforts the room afforded, scrutinizing the etchings, the stuffs on the walls, the old brass —dropping finally into one of the easy chairs by the fire with the same complacency with which he would have dropped into his own at the club; and Woods, Marny, Pitkin, Lonnegan, and the others had all responded in

a way to make each guest feel at home—guests and hosts conducting themselves after the manner of humans.

Chief's entrance and greeting were along lines peculiarly his own. He walked in with head erect, his big eyes sweeping the room, stood for an instant surveying the field, and then walked straight to Mac, where he returned his host's welcoming hug by snuggling his big head between his knees. His "manners" made to his host, he visited each guest in turn—those he knew—waited an instant to be petted and talked to, and then stretched himself out at full length on the rug before the fire, where he lay without moving during the entire evening.

"Watch him, Lonny!" burst out Mac—he had followed Chief's every movement since the dog entered the room—"see the way he lies down. Got royal blood in him, old man; goes back to the flood; Noah saw one of his ancestors swimming round and saved him

first. I feel as if I were entertaining a Prime Minister."

The atmosphere of the place began to tell on the new company. The banker found himself talking to Boggs in whispers, his respect for his host increasing every moment. That men could plod on as Mac was doing, hampered by a poverty which was only too evident in his surroundings, and still maintain a certain contempt for riches, hidden though it might be under a courtesy which found expression in a big broad fellowship, was a revelation to him. A sort of reverence for the man took possession of him, as if he had fallen upon a supposed tramp whom he had afterward discovered to be either a prophet or some world-known philosopher.

Murphy, the journalist, being poor himself, had other views of life. To him MacWhirter and his intimates were men after his own heart. He and they had followed the same road, although with different aims.

They understood each other. As to the rich banker, if the journalist considered him at all it was purely in the line of his own calling—just so much material for future columns of type, whenever he could utilize either his personality or his views.

"No, I don't think American Bohemian life—which is a misnomer," said Murphy in answer to one of the banker's inquiries, "because no such thing exists—is any different from any other such life the world over. We are a class to ourselves, but we in no way differ from our brothers of the brush and quill abroad. I, of course, am only allowed to creep around the outside edges, but even that small privilege affords me more pleasure than any other I possess. Murray Hill and Belgravia may be necessary to our civilization, but neither one nor the other interests the man who has any purpose in life. Take, for instance, these men here," and he pointed to Mac, who was for the moment

driving a wooden spigot into the keg of beer. "Look at MacWhirter. He doesn't want any liveried servant to wait on him; he would serve that beer himself if there was a line of flunkies extending from the door to the sidewalk."

"That's what I like him for," cried the banker, jumping up, "and I'm going to help him," and he carried some of the mugs over to Mac's side. "Here, fill these, Mr. MacWhirter."

"Bully for him!" muttered Pitkin, turning to me as if for confirmation. "Didn't know it was in him."

"This mug's for you, Mr. MacWhirter," cried out the banker, with an enthusiasm he had not shown since his college days, as he handed the mug to Mac, who drank its contents, his merry eyes fixed on the banker.

"See the monarch picking up the painter's brushes," whispered Boggs to Marny from behind his hand.

And so the evening went on, the mugs being filled and emptied, the piano opened, Woods playing the accompaniment to all the songs the Irishman sang—and he had a dozen of them that no one had ever heard before—the banker and club man joining in the chorus. Then with pipes and mugs in hand the circle about the crackling logs was formed anew—this time twice its regular size to give Chief plenty of room—and the story-telling part of the evening began.

The club man told of a supper he had been to after the theatre in an uptown back room, in which a mysterious man and a veiled lady figured. Woods supplemented it by an experience of his own, having special reference to a lost lace handkerchief which had been discovered in the outside pocket of one of the male guests, producing uncomfortable consequences. I gave the details of a dinner where I had met a titled individual who claimed to be a mighty hunter of big game,

and about whom the prettiest woman in the room had gone wild, and who turned out later to be somebody's footman.

Murphy, not to be outdone, and recognizing that his turn had come, remarked in a low voice that my story of big game reminded him "of something in his own experience," at which Boggs twisted his head to listen. It was evident to Boggs, and to the other habitués, that if the Irishman talked as well as he sang he would not only be a welcome guest at these "nights" but he might also attain to full membership in the charmed circle. Of one thing everybody was assured—there was no "water in his oil."

"It's about a fellow countryman of Mr. MacWhirter's, a Scotchman by the name of MacDuff," the Irishman began.

"Me a Scotchman!" cried Mac; "I'm only half Scotch—wish I was a whole one."

"That's because you took to beer and left off drinking whiskey," laughed Murphy.

"MacDuff stuck to his national beverage. That's what helped him to keep his end up. All this happened at an English country house."

Here Boggs hitched his chair closer so that he might lead the applause if this new departure of his friend as a story-teller failed at first to make the expected hit, and thus needed his encouragement.

"Up in Devonshire," continued Murphy, "a very noble lord (his ancestors were something in beer, I think) was giving a dinner to Lord Ponsonby, K.C.B., Y.Z., and maybe P.D.Q., for all I know. Ponsonby had just returned from India, where he had distinguished himself in Her Majesty's service; stamped out a mutiny, perhaps, by hanging the natives, or otherwise disporting himself after the manner of his kind.

"Imagine the interior of the dining-room, if you please, gentlemen—the walls panelled in black oak; sideboards to match, covered

with George the Third silver and bearing the new coat-of-arms; noiseless servants in knee breeches, except the head butler in funereal black—black as a raven and as awkward; old family portraits on the walls; big windows overlooking the lawn sweeping to the river, with rabbits and pheasants making free until the shooting season opened. At the head of the table sat the noble lord, presiding with a smile that was an inch deep on his face. On his right sat the distinguished diplomat with a bay window in front of him, resting on the edge of the table, and kept snugly in place by a white waistcoat; red face, burgundy red, with daily washings of champagne to lend some tone to the color; gray side-whiskers with gray standing hair, straight up like a shoe brush; big jowls of cheeks; flabby mouth; two little restless eyes like a terrier's, and a voice like a fog-horn with an attack of croup. When he glanced down the table everybody expected fifty lashes; he had

learned that look in India and carried it with him; it was part of his stock in trade.

"Next to Ponsonby sat two dudes from London, high-collared chaps, all shirt front and white tie, hair parted in the middle and slicked down on the sides like a lady's lap-dog. One had six hairs on each side of his upper lip and the other was smooth shaven. Then came a country parson, a fellow in a long-tailed coat, buttoned up to his chin, with an inch of collar showing above; a mild-mannered, girl-voiced, timid brother, with a face as round as a custard pie and about as expressive. When he was spoken to he rubbed his bleached, bony hands together, bent his shoulders, and answered with a humility that would have done credit to a Franciscan monk begging alms for a convent. He had eaten nothing for two days before the dinner—so nervous had he become over the great honor conferred upon him in being invited—and was so humble when he arrived, and so pale

and washed-out looking, that after being presented to the great man his host inquired if he were not ill. Opposite these sat two or three country gentlemen, simple, straightforward men who make up the best of English life. Men of no pretence and men of great simplicity. These two, of course, were also in evening dress.

"At the end of the table sat MacDuff, a little, red-headed, sawed-off Scotchman, about as high as Mr. Boggs's shoulder, chunkily built, square-chested; clean-shaven face, with bristling eyebrows, searching brown eyes that never winked, a determined jaw, and a mouth that came together like a trunk lid—even all along the lips. He was dressed in a suit of gray cloth, sack coat and all. His ancestors antedated all those on the wall by about two hundred years, and as a modern dress-suit was unknown in their day he selected one of his own. This was a fad of his and one everybody recognized. No dinner was complete

without MacDuff. Very often he never spoke half a dozen words during the entire repast. He had friends, however, up at the castle, and that made up for all his other shortcomings. A nod of MacDuff's head got many a man his appointment.

"When the port was served, the noble lord turned to his distinguished guest and said, with a glow on his face that made the candles pale with envy:

" 'Gentlemen, I am about to arsk Lord Ponsonby a great favor, and I know that you will add your voice to mine in urging him to comply. Only larst night he delighted a number of us at the club by giving us an account of a most ex*trawd*'nary adventure that befell him in the wilds of India—a most ex*trawd*'nary adventure. I have rarely seen, in all me expa-rience, so profound an impression made upon a group of men. I am now going to arsk our distinguished guest to repeat it.'

"At this Ponsonby waved his hand in a deprecating way, just as he would have done had his retainers offered him the crown—such trifles being beneath his notice. Our host went on:

" 'Despite his reluctance, I feel sure that he will yield. May I arsk your Lordship to repeat it to me guests?'

"Ponsonby bowed; settled himself slightly in his chair so that the curve in his waistcoat could have full play, toyed with his knife a moment, looked up at the ceiling as if to remember some of the most important details, cleared his throat, and shot a glance down the table to command attention. Everybody felt that the slightest sound from any lips but his own would be punished with instant death.

" 'Well, I don't care if I do. About four ye-ars ago His Royal Highness, as you know, came out to India, and it became part of me duty to attend upon his purson. He was good enough to remember that service in a way

with which, of course, you are all familiar. One morning at daylight his equerry came to me quarters, routed me out of bed, and informed me that His Royal Highness desired me to join him in a tiger hunt, which had been arranged for the night before, and which, owing to me purfect knowledge of the country—I knowing every inch of the ground —His Royal Highness desired to have conducted under me supervision.'

"The two dudes were now listening so intently that one of them came near sliding off the chair. The Curate sat with eyes and mouth open, his hand cupping his ear, drinking in each word with the same attention that he would have shown the Bishop of his diocese. The two country gentlemen leaned forward to hear the better. MacDuff kept perfectly still, his eyes on his plate, his finger around his glass of Scotch and soda.

" 'When we reached the jungle—I was mounted on an elephant with two of me re-

tainers; His Royal Highness ahead on another elephant, an *enor*-mous beast accustomed to hunts of this ke-ind—I heard a plunge in the thicket to me left, the spring of a man-eater! There is no sound like it, gentlemen. The next instant he came head on, bounding like a great cat. When he reached the elephant of His Royal Highness he gathered his forepaws under him, hunched his hind legs, and made ready for the fatal spring. I knew what would happen. I realized in an instant the danger. There was one chawnce in a thousand, but that chawnce I must take. I caught up me forty-four! The beast was now in the air. The next instant his claws would be in the flank of the elephant, and the next His Royal Highness would be chewed to mince-meat. At that instant I fired; there came a yell; the brute fell back lifeless, and the Prince was saved! The ball had taken him over the left eye! I dismounted and hurried to his side. He

was the largest beast of his ke-ind I had ever seen in all me expa'rience of twenty ye-ars. When we got him out upon the sward he measured twenty-nine feet from the end of his nose to the tip of his tail. If His Royal Highness, gentlemen, is with us to-day, it is due to that shot.'

"A dead silence followed. Saving a future king's life was too grave a matter for applause. The silence was broken by one of the dudes cackling in a low whisper to his mate:

" 'Gus, old chap, you know that Ponsonby when he was in the Gyards—aw—was an awful man with a gun. He used to hit—aw—a bull's-eye every time, you know—aw—aw—aw——'

"The country gentlemen held their peace. The Curate now piped up. This was his opportunity.

" 'Me Lawd,' he cooed—a dove could not have been more dulcet in its tones—'what I

like in a sto-ory of that ke-ind is not so much the wonderful skill of the sportsman as the marvellous inflooence of the British character over the brute beasts of the field.'

"Ponsonby nodded pompously in acknowledgment, and continued to play with his knife. The host beamed down the table; comments were still in order—that's what the story was told for. The country gentlemen passed, and MacDuff, reaching over, drew his glass of Scotch closer, leaned forward with his elbows on the cloth, lowered his head, and fixed his gimlet eyes on Ponsonby's face.

" 'Well, I have listened with gr'at pl'asure to the story of Lord Ponsonby. It is veery interestin', and it was veery patriootic of him. I am not much of a hunter mesel', and I do not shoot tagers, but I am a wee bit of a fasherman, and last soommer up in the County of Dee I 'ooked a veery pecooliar fash called a skat'—here MacDuff raised his

glass to his lips, his eyes still glued to Ponsonby's face—'and when we got him oout upon th' bank he covered four acres.'

"Ponsonby rose to his feet red as a lobster; swore that he had never been so insulted in his life, the host trying to pacify him. The dudes were stunned, while the country gentlemen and the Curate stood aghast. MacDuff never moved an inch from his seat. Ponsonby, purple with rage, stalked out of the room, flung himself into the library, followed by the host and all the guests except MacDuff. The dudes were so overcome that they were mopping their faces with their napkins, believing them to be their handkerchiefs. While Ponsonby was roaring for his carriage the host rushed back to MacDuff's side.

" 'You must apologize, sir, and at once,' he screamed; 'at once, Mr. MacDuff. How is it possible, sir, for a man raised as a gentleman to come into an Englishman's house and insult one of Her Majesty's most distin-

guished sarvants; a man who for fifty ye-ars has——'

"MacDuff clapped one hand to his ear as if to protect it from rupture.

" 'Don't br'ak the drum of me ear,' he said in a low, deprecating tone. 'I didn't mean to insoolt Lord Ponsonby. I can't apologize, for the story of the skat's true. But I'll tell you what I'll do. If Lord Ponsonby will tak' aboout eighteen feet off the length of that tager, I'll see what can be doon aboout the skat.' And he emptied the contents of his glass into his person."

The laughter that followed the conclusion of Murphy's story was so loud and continuous that the big St. Bernard dog rose to his feet and fastened his eyes on his master, only resuming his position on the rug when Lonnegan laid his hand reassuringly on his head.

Boggs was so pleased at his friend's success that he could hardly keep from hugging

him. All doubts as to Murphy's being asked to become a permanent member of the Select Circle were dissipated. What delighted Boggs most was the combination of English, Irish, and Scotch dialects twisted about the same tongue. He thought he knew something about dialects, but Murphy had beaten him at his own game.

Every man present had some opinion to offer regarding Ponsonby's adventure, and they all differed. Marny thought the Scot served the old bag of wind right, even if he did have a numismatic collection decorating his chest. The banker was interested in the social side and what it expressed, and said so, winding up with the remark that the "Englishmen knew how to live." Mac, to the surprise of everybody, had no opinion to offer. Woods was more philosophical.

"To me the story is much more than funny," said Woods, "it's instructive. Shows the whole national spirit of the English.

They believe in rank and they love to kotow. I say this in no offensive spirit; and being an Irishman, you, of course, know what I mean; and to tell you the truth I am English in that sense myself. I believe in an aristocracy and in class distinction. Here everybody is free and equal; free with everything you own and ready to divide it up equally as soon as they get their hands on it. Democracy is the curse of our country."

"Woods, you talk like a two-cent demagogue," broke out Boggs. "If you and Lonnegan don't give up Murray Hill life you'll be worse than Mr. Murphy's two dudes. There is no such thing as democracy in our country. You couldn't find it with a microscope. As soon as a man gets one hundred cents together and has got them hived away safely in a savings bank he becomes a capitalist. The next generation breeds aristocrats. The son of the man who waits behind Lonnegan's chair at one of the swell

affairs uptown, if he has his way, will be Minister to England, and wear knee-breeches at the Queen's receptions. Even the negroes are climbing; some of them even now are putting on more airs than a Harlem goat with a hoopskirt. When they get on top there won't be anything left of the white man. They are beginning in that way now down South. Now you," turning to his friend Murphy, "have told us a story which illustrates a phase of English life in which the middle classes stand in awe of the higher ones. Now listen to one of mine, which illustrates a phase of American life, and quite the reverse of yours. I'll tell it to you just as Major Yancey told it to me, and I'll give you, as near as I can, his tones of voice. Wonderfully pathetic, that Southern dialect; it certainly was to me the day I heard him tell it. This Yancey was a fraud, so far as being a representative Virginia gentleman; didn't get within a thousand miles of the real

thing; but that didn't rob his story of a certain meaning."

Here Boggs rose to his feet. "I'll have to get up," he said, "for this is one of the stories I can't tell sitting down." Nobody ever heard Boggs tell any story sitting down. The restless little fellow was generally on his plump legs during most of his deliveries.

"I had seen Yancey in the hotel corridor when I came in, and had stubbed my toe over his outstretched legs—out like a pair of skids on the tail of a dray; had apologized to the legs; had been apologized to most effusively in return, with the result that a few minutes later I found him at my elbow at the bar, where, after some protestations on his part, he concluded to accept my very 'co-tious' invitation, and 'take somethin'.'

" 'I am sorry I haven't a ke-ard, suh. My name is Yancey, suh—Thomas Morton Yancey, of Green Briar County, Virginia. You don't know that po'tion of my State. suh.

It's God's own country. Great changes have taken place, suh—not only in our section of the State, but in our people. I myself am not what I appear, suh, as you shall learn later. The old rulin' classes are goin' to the wall; it is the po' white trash and the negroes, suh, that are comin' to the front. Pretty soon we shall have to ask their permission to live on the earth. Now, to give you an idea, suh, of what these changes mean, and how stealthily they are creepin' in among us, I want to tell you, suh, somethin' connected with my own life, for ev'ry word of which I can vouch. Thank you, I will take a drop of bitters in mine,' and he held his glass out to the barkeeper. 'I don't want to detain you, suh, and I don't want to bore you, but it's the first time for some months that I have had the pleasure of meetin' a Northern gentleman, and I feel it my duty, suh, to give you somethin' of the inside history of the South, and to let you know, suh, what we

Southern people suffered immediately after the war, and are still sufferin'.

" 'As for myself, suh, I came out penniless, my estates practically confiscated, owin' to some very peremptory proceedin's which took place immediately after the surrender. I, of course, suh, like many other gentlemen of my standin', found it necessary to go to work, the first stroke of work that any of my blood, suh, had ever done since my ancestors settled that po'tion of the State, suh. A crisis, suh, had arrived in my life, and I proposed to meet it. Question was, what could I do? I hadn't studied law and so I could not be a lawyer, and I hadn't taken any course in medicine and so I couldn't be a doctor; and I want to tell you, suh, that the politics of my State were not runnin' in a groove by which I could be elected to any public office. After lookin' over the ground I decided to open a livery stable. Don't start, suh. I know it will shock you when I tell you that

a Yancey had fallen so low, but you must know, suh, that my wife hadn't had a new dress in fo' years and my children were pretty nigh barefoot. Well, suh, a circus company had passed through our way and left two spavined horses in Judge Caldwell's lot and a bo'rd bill of fo' dollars and ninety-two cents unpaid. I took my note for a hundred dollars and Judge Caldwell endorsed it, and I sold it for the amount of the bo'rd bill, and I got the two horses. Then I made another note for a similar amount and secured it by a mortgage on the horses, and got a fo'seated wagon and two sets of second-hand harness. Then I put a sign over my barn do'—"Thomas Martin Yancey, Livery & Sale Stable."

" 'About a week after I had started Colonel Moseley's black Sam—free then, of co'se, suh—come down to my place and said, "Major Yancey, there's goin' to be a ball over to Barboursville——"

" ' "Is there, Sam?" I said. "You niggers seem to be gettin' up in the world."

" ' "Yes," he said, "and I want you to hook yo' rig and take eight of us——"

" ' "What! you infernal scoundrel! You come to me and ask me to——"

" ' "Now, don't get het up, Major! Eight niggers at fifty cents apiece is fo' dollars."

" ' "Yancey," I said to myself, "brace up! This is one of the great crises of yo' life. Sam, bring on yo' mokes!"

" 'There was fo' bucks and fo' wenches, all rigged out to kill. I put 'em in and started.

" 'It was a very cold night, coldest weather I'd seen in my State for years, with a light crust of snow on the ground. When we got to Barboursville—it was about eight miles—I found the ball was over a grocery store with a pair of steps goin' up on the outside to a little bal-cony. Well, suh, they got out and went up ahead, and I blanketed the horses

and followed. When I opened the do'—you ain't familiar, suh, I reckon, with our part of the country, suh, but I tell you, suh, that with three fiddles, two red hot stoves, and eighty niggers, all dancin', the atmosphere was oppressive! I stood it as long as I could and then I went out on the bal-cony. Then I said to myself—"Yancey, this is a great crisis of yo' life, but you needn't get pneumonia. Go in and sit down inside."

" 'I hadn't been there three minutes, suh, when black Sam came up to the bench on which I was sittin'—he had two wenches on his arm—and said, "Major Yancey; would you have any objection to steppin' outside?"

" ' "Why?" I asked.

" ' "Cause some of the ladies objects to the smell of horse in yo' clo'es."

" 'I left the livery business that night, suh, and I am what you see—a broken-down Southern gentleman.' "

Another outburst of laughter followed. Everybody agreed that Boggs had never been so happy in his delineations. The banker, who knew something of the Southern dialects, was overjoyed. The allusion to the ungentlemanly foreclosure proceedings touched his funny-bone in a peculiar manner, and set him to laughing again whenever he thought of it. Everybody had expressed some opinion both of Murphy's story and of Boggs's yarn but MacWhirter, who, strange to say, had seen nothing humorous in either narrative. During the telling he had been bending over in his chair stroking the dog's ears.

"What do you think of the two yarns, Mac?" asked Marny.

"Think just what Mr. Murphy thinks—that the Englishman was a snob, Ponsonby a cad, and that MacDuff should have been shown the door. The group about that Englishman's table was not of the best English society—nowhere near it. Consideration for

the other man's feelings, the one below you in rank, invariably distinguishes the true English gentleman. That old story about the sergeant who got the Victoria Cross for bringing a wounded officer out under fire illustrates what I mean," continued Mac in a perfectly grave, sober voice.

"Never heard it."

"Then I'll tell you. He had crawled on all fours to a wounded officer, picked him up, and had carried him off the firing line under a hail of bullets, one of which broke his wrist. He was promoted on the field by his commanding officer, got the V.C., and took his place among his now brother officers at the company's mess, and, it being his first meal, sat on the Colonel's right. Ice was served, a little piece about the size of a lump of sugar—precious as gold in that climate. It was for the champagne, something he had never seen. The hero was served first. He hesitated a moment, and dropped it in his

soup. The Colonel took his piece and dropped it in his soup; so did every other gentleman down both sides of the table drop his in the soup. As to Boggs's Virginian, he got what he deserved. He was trying to be something that he wasn't; I'm glad the darkey took the pride out of him. It's all a pretence and a sham. They are all trying to be something they are not. 'Tisn't democracy or aristocracy that is to blame with us—it's the growing power of riches; the crowding the poor from off the face of the earth. Nothing counts now but a bank account. Pretty soon we will have a clearing-house of titles, based on incomes. When the cashier certifies to the amount, the title is conferred. The man of one million will become a lord; the man with two millions a count; three millions a duke, and so on. To me all this climbing is idiotic."

Roars of laughter followed Mac's outburst. When Boggs got his breath he de-

clared between his gasps that Mac's criticisms were funnier than Murphy's story.

"Takes it all seriously; not a ghost of a sense of humor in him! Isn't he delicious!"

"Go on, laugh away!" continued MacWhirter. "The whole thing, I tell you, is a fraud and a sham. Social ladders are only a few feet long, and the top round, after all, is not very far from the earth. When you climb up to that rung, if you are worth anything, you begin to get lonely for the other fellow, who couldn't climb so high. If it wasn't for our wood fire even our dear Lonnegan would freeze to death. He thinks he's real mahogany, and so he sits round and helps furnish some swell's drawing-room. But that's only Lonny's veneer; his heart's all right underneath, and it's solid hickory all the way through."

When the last of the guests had gone, followed by Chief and some of the habitués,

only Boggs, Marny, Mac, and I remained. Our rooms were within a few steps of the fire and it mattered not how late we sat up. The mugs were refilled, pipes relighted, some extra sticks thrown on the andirons, and the chairs drawn closer. The fire responded bravely—the old logs were always willing to make a night of it. The best part of the evening was to come—that part when its incidents are talked over.

"Mac," said Marny, "you deride money, class distinctions, ambition. What would you want most if you had your wish?"

"Not much."

"Well, let's have it; out with it!" insisted Marny.

"What would I want? Why just what I've got. An easy chair, a pipe, a dog once in a while, some books, a wood fire, and you on the other side, old man," and he laid his hand affectionately on Marny's shoulder.

"Anything more?" asked Boggs, who had been eying his friend closely.

"Yes; a picture that really satisfied me, instead of the truck I'm turning out."

"And you can think of nothing else?" asked Boggs, still keeping his eyes on Mac, his own face struggling with a suppressed smile.

"No—" Then catching the twinkle in Boggs's eyes—"What?"

"A climbing millionnaire to buy it and a swell Murray Hill palace to hang it up in," laughed Boggs.

Mac smiled faintly and leaned forward in his chair, the glow of the fire lighting up his kindly face. For some minutes he did not move; then a half-smothered sigh escaped him.

Instantly there rose in my mind the figure of the girl in the steamer chair, the roses in her lap.

"Was there nothing more?" I asked myself.

PART VIII

In Which Murphy and Lonnegan Introduce Some Mysterious Characters.

THE Old Building was being treated to a sensation, the first of the winter, or rather the first of the spring, for the squatty Japanese bowl standing on top of Mac's mantel was already filled with pussy-willows which the great man had himself picked on one of his strolls under the Palisades.

Strange things were going on downstairs. Outside on the street curb stood a darkey in white cotton gloves, in the main door stood another, the two connected by a red carpet laid across the sidewalk; at the end of the dingy corridor stood a third, and inside the room on the right a fourth and fifth—all in white gloves and all bowing like salaaming

Hindoos to a throng of people in smart toilettes.

Woods was having a tea!

The portrait of Miss B. J.—in a leghorn hat and feathers, one hand on her chin, her pet dog in her lap—was finished, and the B. Js. were assisting Woods's aunt and Woods in celebrating that historical event. The function being an exclusive one, all the details were perfect: There were innumerable candles sputtering away in improvised holders of twisted iron, china, and dingy brass, the grease running down the sides of their various ornaments; there were burning joss sticks; loose heaps of bric-a-brac which looked as if they had been thrown pell-mell together, but which it had taken Woods hours to group; there were combinations of partly screened lights falling on pots of roses; easels draped in stuffs; screens hung with Japanese and Chinese robes; divans covered with rugs and nested with green and yellow cushions;

and last, but by no means least, there was the counterfeit presentment of the young girl who held court on the divan surrounded by an admiring group of admirers; some of whom declared that the likeness was perfect; others that it did not do her justice, and still another —this time an art critic—who said under his breath that the dog was the only thing on the canvas that looked alive.

Upstairs, before his wood fire, sat MacWhirter, with only Marny and me to keep him company. He never went to teas; didn't believe in mixing with society.

"Better shut the door, hadn't I?" said Mac. "Those joss sticks of Woods's smell like an opium joint," and he began shifting the screen. "Hello, Lonnegan, that you?"

"That's me, Mac," answered the architect in a cheery tone. "Are you moving house?"

"No, trying to get my breath. Did you ever smell anything worse than that heathen punk Woods is burning?"

"You ought to get a whiff of it inside his studio," answered Lonnegan. "Got every window tight shut, the room darkened, and jammed with people. Came near getting my clothes torn off wedging myself in and out," he continued, readjusting his scarf, pulling up the collar of his Prince Albert coat, and tightening the gardenia in his button-hole. "You're going down, Mac, aren't you?"

"No, going to stay right here; so is Marny and the Colonel."

"Woods won't like it."

"Can't help it. Woods ought to have better sense than to turn his studio upside down for a lot of people that don't know a Velasquez from an 'Old Oaken Bucket' chromo. Art is a religion, not a Punch and Judy show. Whole thing is vulgar. Imagine Rembrandt showing his 'Night Watch' for the first time to the rag-tag and bob-tail of Amsterdam, or Titian making a night of it over his 'Ascen-

sion.' Sacrilege, I tell you, this mixing up of ice-cream and paint; makes a farce of a high calling and a mountebank of the artist! If we are put here for anything in this world it is to show our fellow-sinners something of the beauty we see and they can't; not to turn clowns for their amusement."

Boggs and Murphy—the Irish journalist had long since become a full member—had entered and stood listening to Mac's harangue.

"Land o' Moses! Whew!" burst out the Chronic Interrupter. "What's the matter with you, Mac? You never were more mistaken in your life. You sit up here and roast yourself over the fire and you don't know what's going on outside. Woods is all right. He's got his living to make and his studio rent to pay, and his old aunt is as strong as a three-year-old and may live to be ninety. If these people want ice-cream fed to them out of oil cups and want to eat it with palette

knives, let 'em do it. That doesn't make the picture any worse. You saw it. It's a bully good portrait. Fifty times better looking than the girl and some ripping good things in it—shadow tones under the hat and the brush work on the gown are way up in G. Don't you think so, Lonnegan?"

"Yes, best thing Woods has done; but Mac is partly right about the jam downstairs. Half of them didn't know Woods when they came in. One woman asked me if I was he, and when I pointed him out, beaming away, she said, 'What! that little bald-headed fellow with a red face? And is that the picture? Why, I am surprised!'

"Of course she was surprised," chimed in Mac. "What she expected to see was a six-legged goat or a cow with two tails."

Jack Stirling's head was now thrust over the Chinese screen. Jack had been South for half the winter and his genial face was the signal for a prolonged shout of welcome.

"Yes, that's me," Jack answered, "got home this morning; almighty glad to see you fellows! Mac, old man, you look more like John Gilbert grown young than ever; getting another chin on you. Lonny, shake, old fellow! Hello, Boggs! you're fat enough to kill. Mr. Murphy, glad to see you; heard you had been given a chair by Mac's fire. Oh, biggest joke on me, fellows, you ever heard. I stopped in at Woods's tea-party a few minutes ago. Lord! what a jam! and hot! Well, Florida is a refrigerator to it. Struck a pretty girl—French, I think—pretty as a picture; big hat, gown fitting like a glove, eyes, mouth, teeth—well! You remember Christine, don't you, Mac?" and he winked meaningly at our host. "Same type, only a trifle stouter. She wanted to know how old one of Woods's tapestries was, and where one of his embroideries came from, and I got her off on a divan and we were having a beautiful time when an old lady came up and called

me off, and whispered in my ear that I ought to know that my charmer was her own dressmaker, who was looking up new costumes and——"

"Fine! Glorious!" shouted Mac. "That's something like! That's probably the only honest guest Woods has. I hope, Jack, you went right back to her and did your prettiest to entertain her."

"I tried to, but she had skipped. Give me a pipe, Mac. Lord, fellows, but it's good to get back! You'll find this a haven of rest, Mr. Murphy," and Jack laid his hand on the Irishman's knee.

"It's the only place that fits my shoulders and warms my heart, anyhow," answered Murphy. "It's good of you to let me in. You live so fast over here that a little cranny like this, where you can get out of the rush, is a Godsend. Your adventure downstairs with the dressmaker, Mr. Stirling, reminds me of what happened at one of our great

London houses last winter, and which is still the social mystery of London."

Boggs waved his hand to command attention. His friend Murphy's yarns were the hit of the winter. "Listen, Jack," he said in a lower tone, "they are all brand-new and he tells 'em like a master. Nobody can touch him. Draw up, Pitkin—" the sculptor had just come in from Woods's tea.

"We have the same thing in England to fight against that you have here. Our studios and private exhibitions are blocked up with people who are never invited. Hardest thing to keep them out. The incident I refer to occurred in one of those great London houses on Grosvenor Square, occupied that winter by Lord and Lady Arbuckle—a dingy, smoky, grime-covered old mansion, with a green-painted door, flower boxes in the windows, and a line of daisies and geraniums fringing the rail of the balcony above.

"There the Arbuckles gave a series of din-

ners or entertainments that were the talk of London, not for their magnificence so much as for the miscellaneous lot of people Lady Arbuckle would gather together in her drawing-rooms. If somebody from Vienna had discovered microbes in cherry jam, off went an invitation to the distinguished professor to dine or tea or be received and shaken hands with. Savants with big foreheads, hollow eyes, and shabby clothes; sunburned soldiers from the Soudan; fat composers from Leipsic; long-haired painters from Munich; Indian princes in silk pajamas and kohinoors, were all run to cover, caught, and let loose at the Arbuckle's Thursdays in Lent, or had places under her mahogany. Old Arbuckle let it go on without a murmur. If Catherine liked that sort of thing, why that was the sort of thing that Catherine liked. He would preside at the head of the table in his white choker and immaculate shirt front and do the honors of the house. Occasionally, when

Parliament was not sitting, he would stroll through the drawing-rooms, shake hands with those he knew, and return the salaams or stares of those he did not.

"On this particular night there was to be an imposing list of guests, the dinner being served at eight-thirty sharp. Not only was the Prime Minister expected, but a special collection of social freaks had been invited to meet him, including Prince Pompernetski of the Imperial Guards—who turned out afterward to be a renegade Pole and a swindler; the Rajah of Bramapootah—a waddling Oriental who always brought his Cayenne pepper with him in the pocket of his embroidered pajamas; one or two noble lords and their wives, some officers, and a scattering of lesser lights—twenty-two in all.

"At eight-twenty the carriages began to arrive, the Bobby on the beat regulating the traffic; the guests stepping out upon a carpet a little longer and wider than the one Mr.

Woods has laid over the sidewalk downstairs.

"Once inside, the guests were taken in charge by a line of flunkeys—the women to a cloak room on the right, the men to a basement room on the left—where 'Chawles' handed each man an envelope containing the name of the lady he was to take out to dinner and a diagram designating the location of his seat at his host's table.

"By eight-twenty-five all the guests had arrived except General Sir John Catnall and Lady Catnall, who had passed thirty years of their life in India and who had arrived in London but the night before, where they were met by one of Lady Arbuckle's notes inviting them to dinner to meet the Prime Minister. That the dear woman had never laid eyes on the Indian exiles and would not know either of them had she met them on her sidewalk made no difference to her. The butler in announcing their names would help

her over this difficulty, as he had done a hundred times before. That the short notice might prevent their putting in an appearance did not trouble her in the least. She knew her London. Prime Ministers were not met with every day, even in the best of houses.

"At eight-thirty the two missing guests arrived, Sir John sun-baked to the color of a coolie, and Lady Catnall not much better off so far as complexion was concerned. The climate had evidently done its work. Their queerly cut clothes, too, showed how long they had been out of London.

"With their announcement by the flunkey, who bawled out their names so indistinctly that nobody caught them—not even Lady Arbuckle—the guests marched out to dinner, Lord Arbuckle leading with the wife of the Prime Minister; Lady Arbuckle bringing up the rear with the Rajah, without that lady having the dimmest idea as to whether all her guests were present or not.

"Sir John found himself next to a Roumanian woman who had spent three-quarters of her life in Persia, and Lady Catnall sat beside a baldheaded scientist from Berlin who spoke English as if he were cracking nuts. None of the four had ever heard of the others' existence.

"The dinner was the usual deadly dull affair. The Prime Minister smiled and beamed over his high collar and emitted platitudes that anybody could print without getting the faintest idea of his meaning; and the Rajah peppered and ate with hardly a word of any kind to the lady next him, who talked incessantly; the Scientist jabbered German, completely ignorant of the fact that Lady Catnall could not understand a word of what he said, and the other great personages—especially the women—looked through their lorgnons and studied the menagerie.

"When the port had been served and the ladies had risen to leave the men to their

cigars, Sir John Catnall conducted the Roumanian-Persian combination to the drawing-room door, clicked his heels, bent his back in a salaam, and with a certain anxious look on his face hurried back to the dining-room, and seeing the seat next Lord Arbuckle temporarily empty slid into it, laid his bronzed hand on his host's thin, white, blue-veined wrist, and said in a voice trembling with suppressed emotion:

" 'We got your wife's note and came at once, although our boxes are still unpacked. I could hardly get through the dinner I have been so anxious, but we arrived so late I could not ask your wife—indeed you were already moving in to dinner when your man brought us in. I am in London, as you know, to consult an oculist, for my eyesight is greatly impaired, and he called professionally just as I was leaving my lodgings.' Then bending over Lord Arbuckle he said in a voice tremulous with emotion, 'Tell me

now about Eliza; is she really as badly off as your wife thinks?'

"Arbuckle had learned one thing during his long life with Catherine, never, as you Americans say, to 'give her away.' The identity of the partly blind, sunburned man, with half a cataract over each eye, who was gazing at him so intently awaiting an answer from his lips, was as much of a mystery to him as was the particular malady with which the unknown Eliza was afflicted or the contents of his wife's letter. Instantly Lord Arbuckle's face took on a grave and serious expression.

" 'Yes,' he answered slowly; 'yes, I regret to say that it is all true.'

" 'Good God!' ejaculated the stranger, 'you don't say so. Terrible! Terrible!' and without another word he rose from his seat, tarried for a moment at the mantel gazing into the coals, and then slowly rejoined the ladies.

"When the last guest had departed Arbuckle, who had been smothering a fire of indignation over the stranger's inquiry and at the uncomfortable position in which his wife had placed him, owing to her never consulting him about her guests or her correspondence, shut the door of the drawing-room so the servants could not hear and burst out with:

" 'What damned nonsense it is, Catherine, to invite people who bore you to death with questions you can't answer! Who the devil is Eliza, and what's the matter with her?'

" 'Who wanted to know, my dear?'

" 'That horribly dressed, red-faced person who sat halfway down the table, next to that frightful frump in a turban from Persia.'

" 'I don't know any Eliza!'

" 'But you said you did.'

" 'I said I did?'

" 'Yes; he told me so. You wrote him!

Now be good enough, Catherine, to let me know in advance who you——'

" 'But I never told anybody about Eliza; never heard of her.'

" 'You did, I tell you. You told that fellow who winks all the time, with some beastly thing the matter with his eyes.'

" 'You mean Sir John Catnall? The man who came in just as we were going in to dinner? That is, I suppose it was he. Barton told me we were waiting for him.'

" 'Yes; the fellow said he was late.'

" 'And he told you—' Here the door opened and the butler entered for her Ladyship's orders for the night.

" 'Barton, whom did you announce last?'

" 'I didn't catch the name, your Ladyship, quite.'

" 'Was it Sir John Catnall and Lady Catnall?'

" 'No, your Ladyship. Something that began with P.'

" 'Are you sure it was not "Catnall"?'

" 'Quite sure, your Ladyship. Sir John's man was here just after dinner was announced and left a message, your Ladyship—I forgot to give it to you. He said Sir John had been out of town, and had that moment received your Ladyship's note, and that it was impossible for him to come to dinner. I supposed your Ladyship had known of it and had invited the gentleman and his lady who came last to take their places, and I put them in Sir John's and Lady Catnall's seats as it was marked on the diagram you gave Chawles.'

" 'Just as I supposed, Catherine,' snorted Arbuckle, 'a couple of damned impostors; one passing himself off as a blind man. Serves you right. They've carried off half the plate by this time. Bingeley lost all of his spoons and forks that way last week; he told me so in the House yesterday.'

" 'Impostors! You don't think— Barton, go down instantly and see if anything

has been taken out of the cloak-room. And, Barton, see if that miniature with the jewels around the frame is where I left it on the mantel—and the candlesticks— Oh! you don't think— It can't be— Oh, dear—dear—dear!'

"Again the door opened and Barton appeared.

" 'The candlesticks are all right, your Ladyship; but the miniature is gone. I looked everywhere. Chawles said it was taken to your room by the maid.'

" 'Ring for Prodgers at once.'

" 'I have, your Ladyship. Here she comes with it in her hand,' and he handed the jeweled frame to his mistress.

" 'Oh, I'm so thankful! You're sure nothing else is missing?'

" 'No, your Ladyship; but Chawles found this note on the mantel, which he says he picked up from the table after they had left.'

"Lord Arbuckle craned his head and his wife eagerly scanned the inscription.

"On the envelope, scrawled in pencil, were the three words: 'For dear Eliza.'

"Lady Arbuckle broke the seal.

"Out dropped two twenty-pound Bank of England notes."

The Irishman rose to his feet, pushed back his chair, and taking a briarwood from his pocket and a small bag of tobacco proceeded to fill his pipe.

Mac broke the silence first:

"Case of wrong house, wasn't it? I wonder Catnall didn't find it out before dinner was over."

"Put Arbuckle in a bad hole," remarked Boggs. "What excuse could he make when he returned the money?"

"I'd have given that butler a dressing down," muttered Lonnegan. "He ought to have known that there was some mistake

when the note arrived." Lonnegan like Mac was born without the slightest sense of humor, Boggs always maintained.

"Keep on guessing, gentlemen," exclaimed Murphy; "London guessed for a week, and gave it up."

"Well, but is that all?" asked Stirling.

"Every word and line. Nobody knows to this day who they were or where they came from. The flunkey on the curb said they arrived in a four-wheeler; that he had whistled to the rank at the end of the square for a hansom, and that they both stepped in and drove off."

"And old Arbuckle still bags the money?" inquired Boggs.

"Did, the last I heard."

"Did he try to find out who the fellow was?"

"No, Lady Arbuckle wouldn't let him; it would have given the whole thing away. Besides, it was Arbuckle's statement about

Eliza that made the stranger give the money; rather a delicate situation; looked as if he and his wife had put up a job."

"Poor devil!" muttered Mac. "Lied to his guest, insulted his wife, and robbed some poor woman of a charity that might have restored her to health, and all because of just the same kind of idiotic foolishness that is going on downstairs at Woods's this very minute. Damnable, the whole thing."

"I know of a case," said Lonnegan without noticing Mac's outburst, as he reached for his pipe which he had laid on the mantel, "in which not a mysterious couple but a mysterious woman figured, and I know the man who was mixed up in the affair. He's a civil engineer now and lives in London; got quite a position. When I first met him he was a draughtsman in one of the downtown offices —this was some fifteen years ago. He was a good-looking fellow then, about twenty-seven or eight, I should say, with a smooth-

shaven face and features like a girl's, they were so regular; a handsome chap, really, if he was about up to your shoulders, Mac."

"What sort of a yarn is this, Lonny?" interrupted Boggs. "Got any point to it, or is it one of your long-winded things like the one you told us when you weren't murdered?"

"It's one that will make your hair stand on end," retorted the architect. "Wonder I never told you before!"

"Go on, Lonny," broke in Jack Stirling. "Dry up, Boggs. He was a good-looking chap, you said, Lonny, and about up to Mac's shoulders."

"Yes, and half the size of Boggs around his waist," continued Lonnegan, with a look at MacWhirter.

"The firm he was with sent him to Vienna with some plans and specifications of a big enterprise in which they were interested. He arrived in the evening, hungry, and late for dinner; left his trunk at the station, jumped

into a fiacre and drove to a café on the Ring Strasse that he knew. After dining he made up his mind to go back to the station, pick up his baggage, and find rooms at the Metropole. When he entered the café and took a seat near the door a woman at the next table turned her head and fastened her eyes upon him in a way that attracted his attention. He saw that she was of rather distinguished presence, tall and well formed, broad shoulders —square for a woman—and with a strong nose and chin. She was dressed all in black, her veil almost hiding her face. Not a handsome woman and not young—certainly not under thirty.

"With the serving of the soup he forgot her and went on with his dinner. That over he paid the waiter, strolled out to the street and called a cab. When it drove up the veiled woman stood beside him.

" 'I think this cab is mine, sir,' she said in excellent English.

"The Engineer raised his hat, offered his hand to the woman and assisted her into her seat. When he withdrew his fingers they held a small card edged with black. The woman and the cab disappeared. He turned the card to the light of the street lamp. On it was written in pencil, 'Meet me at Café Ivanoff at ten to-night. You are in danger.'

"The man read the card and strained his eyes after the cab; then he called another, drove down to the station, picked up his trunk, and started for the Hotel Metropole.

"On the way to the hotel he kept thinking of the woman and the card. It had not been the first time that his fresh cheeks and clean-cut features had attracted the attention of some woman dining alone—especially in a city like Vienna; any continental city, in fact. Some of these adventures he had followed up with varying success; some he had forgotten. This one interested him. The proffered ac-

quaintance had been cleverly managed. The warning at the end was, he knew, one of the many ruses to pique his curiosity; but that did not put the woman out of his mind.

"When his baggage had been deposited in his rooms, a small salon, bedroom, and dressing-room, all opening on the corridor—he needed the salon in which to lay out his plans and maps—he gave his hat an extra brush, strolled downstairs, and stepped to the porter's desk.

" 'Porter.'

" 'Yes, sir.'

" 'Where is the Café Ivanoff?'

" 'Near the Opera, sir.'

" 'Is it a respectable place?'

" 'That depends on what your Excellency requires,' and the porter shrugged his shoulders.

" 'It sounds Russian.'

" 'No, sir; it is Polish. You have music

and vodka, and sometimes you have trouble.'

" 'With whom?'

"Again the porter shrugged his shoulders. 'With the police.'

" 'Are there rows?'

" 'No, there are refugees. Vienna is full of them. For you it is nothing—you are an American—am I not right?'

"The Engineer touched his inside pocket, felt the bulge of his pocketbook containing his passport, turned down the Ring Strasse, and stopped at the Opera House. Then he began to look about him. Young, well-built, clear-headed, and imaginative, this sort of an adventure was just what he wanted. Soon his eyes fell upon a café ablaze with light. On a ground-glass globe over the door was the word 'Ivanoff.'

"He passed through the front room, turned into another, and was stopped by a man at the door of the third.

"'What do you want, Monsieur?' This in French.

"'Some cognac and a cup of coffee.'

"'Did Monsieur come in a cab?'

"'No, on foot.'

"'Perhaps, then, the lady came in a cab—and is waiting for you?'

"'Perhaps.'

"'This way, Monsieur.'

"She sat in the far corner of the room, her face hidden in a file of newspapers. She must have known the attendant's step for she raised her head and fastened her eyes on the young man before he was halfway across the room.

"'Sit here, sir,' she said in perfect English, drawing her dress aside so that he could pass to the chair next the wall. 'I am glad you came; I am glad you trusted me enough to come.' Her manner was as composed and her voice as low and gentle and as free from nervousness as if she had known him all her

life. 'And now, before I tell you what I have to say to you, please tell me something about yourself. You are an American and have just arrived in Vienna?'

"The Engineer nodded, his eyes still scanning her face, keeping his own composure as best he could, his astonishment increasing every moment. He had seen at the first glance that she was not the woman he had taken her to be. Her face, on closer inspection, showed her to be nearer forty than thirty, with certain lines about the mouth and eyes which could only have come from suffering. What she wanted of him, or why she had interested herself in his welfare, was what puzzled him.

" 'You have a mother, perhaps, at home, and some brothers, and you love them,' she continued.

"Again the Engineer nodded.

" 'How many brothers have you?'

" 'One, Madame.'

"'That is another bond of sympathy between us. I have one brother left.' All this time her eyes had been riveted on his, boring into his own as if she was trying to read his very thoughts.

"'Is he in danger like me, Madame?' asked the Engineer with a smile.

"'Yes, we all are; we live in danger. I have been brought up in it.'

"'But why should I be?' and he handed her the card with the black edge.

"'You are not,' she said, crumpling the card in her hand and slipping it into her dress. 'It was only a very cheap ruse of mine. I saw you at the next table and knew your nationality at once. You can help me, if you will, and you are the only one who can. You seemed to be sent to me. I thought it all out and determined what to do. You see how calm I am, and yet my hands have been icy cold waiting for you. I dared not hope you would really come until I saw you enter

and speak to Polski. But you cannot stay here; you may be seen and I do not want you to be seen—not now. We Poles are watched night and day; someone may come in and you might have to tell who you are, and that must not be.' Then she added cautiously, her eyes fastened on his, 'Your passport—you have one, have you not?'

" 'Yes, for all over Europe.'

" 'Oh, yes; of course.' This came with a sigh of relief, as if she had dreaded another answer. 'That is the right way to travel while this revolution goes on. Yes, yes; a passport is quite necessary. Now give me your address. Metropole? Which room? Number thirty-nine? Very well; I'll be there at eight o'clock to-morrow night. Never mind the coffee, I will pay for it with mine. Go—now—out the other door; not the one you came in. There is somebody coming—quick!'

"The tone of her voice and the look in her eye lifted him out of his seat and started him toward the door without another word. She was evidently accustomed to be obeyed.

"The next night at eight precisely there came a rap at his door and a woman wrapped in a coarse shawl, and with a basket covered with a cloth on her arm, stood outside.

" 'I have brought Monsieur's laundry,' she said. 'Shall I lay it in the bedroom or here in the salon?' and she stepped inside.

"The door shut, she laid the empty basket on the floor and threw back her shawl.

" 'Don't be worried,' she said, turning the key in the lock, 'and don't ask any questions. I will go as I came. Someone might have stopped me. I got this basket and shawl from my own laundress. There will be no one here? You are sure? Then let me sit beside you and tell you what I could not last night.

" 'Our people go to that café,' she continued, as she led him to the sofa, 'because, strange to say, the police think none of us would dare go there. That makes it the safest. Besides, every one of the servants is our friend.'

"Then she unfolded a yarn that made his hair stand on end. She had been banished from a little town in central Poland where she had taken part in the revolution. Two brothers had died in exile, the other was in hiding in Vienna. It was absolutely necessary that this remaining brother should get back to Warsaw. Not only her own life depended on it but the lives of their compatriots. Some papers which had been hidden were in danger of being discovered; these must be found and destroyed. Her brother was now on his way to the hotel and the room in which they then sat; he would join them in an hour. At nine o'clock he would send his card up and must be received. His name

was Matzoff—her own name before she was married. Would he lend him his clothes and his passport? She could not ask this of anyone but an American; when she saw him and looked into his face she knew God had sent him to her. Only Americans sympathized with her poor country. The passport would be handed back to him in three days by the same man—Polski—who conducted him to her table at the Café Ivanoff; so would the clothes. He would not need either in that time. Would he save her and her people?'

"Well, you can imagine what happened. Like many other young fellows, carried off his feet by the picturesqueness of the whole affair—the appeal to his patriotism, to his love of justice, to all the things that count when you are twenty-five and have the world in a sling—he consented. It was agreed that she was to wait in the dressing-room, which also opened on the corridor, and show her-

self to the brother, and get him safely inside the dressing-room. The Engineer was not to see him come. If anything went wrong it was best that he could not identify him. She would then help him dress—he was about the same build as the Engineer and could easily wear his clothes. Moreover, he was dark like the Engineer; black hair and black eyes and just his age. Indeed one reason she picked him out at the café on the Ring Strasse was because he looked so much like her own brother.

"The two began to get ready for the expected arrival—a shirt and collar, tie, gloves, travelling suit, overcoat, and the Engineer's bag with his initials on it were laid out in the dressing-room, together with an umbrella and walking-stick and the passport. He was to walk down the corridor and out of the hotel precisely as the young Engineer would walk out. If he could only see her brother he would know how complete the dis-

guise would be; just his size—her own, really—her brother being small for a man and she being tall and broad for a woman.

"At nine o'clock she put her head out of the dressing-room door, laid her fingers on her lips, pushed the Engineer into the salon and locked the door. The brother evidently was approaching. Next he heard the dressing-room door click. Then the sound of a man rapidly changing his clothes could be heard. Then a soft click of the latch and a heavy step.

"Here his curiosity overcame him and he cautiously opened the salon door and peered down the corridor. A man carrying his bag, cane, and umbrella, an overcoat on his arm, was walking rapidly toward the staircase. He drew in his head and waited. Five minutes passed, then ten. He tried the dressing-room door. It was still locked. Stepping out into the corridor he turned the knob and walked into the dressing-room. It was empty.

On the floor was a pair of corsets, some petticoats, and a dress!"

"Skipped! Well, by Jove!" cried Marny. "Nihilist, wasn't she?"

"He never knew; doesn't to this day."

"What was she then?" persisted Marny.

"I don't know. My only solution was that she was herself in danger of her life and had cooked up the yarn about her brother to get out of Vienna."

"Did he get his passport back?" asked Stirling.

"Yes, three months afterward by mail to his bankers from the Hotel Metropole. She, or somebody else, had been half over Europe with it; twice to St. Petersburg and once to Warsaw. The clothes and bag he never heard of. The waiter at the Café Ivanoff—the one she called Polski—had disappeared and he dare not make any inquiries."

Pushed the engineer into the salon.

"But I don't see why he was afraid, an American like him," broke in Marny.

"Let up, Marny!" exclaimed Boggs. "Don't spoil a good yarn. What difference does it make who she was? You've got a first rate doll, don't pick it to pieces to find out what it's stuffed with; give your imagination play and enjoy it. She suggests a dozen things to me, but I don't want any one of them *proved*. She might have been chief of a band of poisoners with a private graveyard in her cellar; her smile, perdition; her glance, death. She could also have eluded the Secret Service of Russia for years in disguises that the mother who bore her wouldn't have known her in;—her exploits the talk of all Europe. Then her miraculous escapes —one for instance across the frontier in a sledge on forged passports, and the disguise of an officer, her maid dressed as an orderly, both of them smothered in priceless furs; her being trailed to her hotel by

a sleuth; her lightning change of costume to low-neck gown and jewels given her by a Russian Grand Duke whose body was found in the Neva the morning after she left; the murder of the sleuth, with a card tied to the stiletto marked with a skull and crossbones. You fellows are going wild over this new French impressionistic craze—the vague, the mysterious, and the suggestive. Why not apply it to literature? If a man can paint a figure with three dabs of his brush, why can't a man draw a character or a situation with three strokes of his pen? You are too literal, old man!"

"Anything else, you overstuffed, loquacious sausage?" cried Marny.

"Yes," retorted Boggs. "That woman was no doubt a member of the——"

"Stop, you beggar!" cried Jack Stirling. "Don't let him get loose again, Marny! Stuff a pipe in his mouth. Boggs, you are the only man I know who can start his mouth

going and go away and leave it. Here, fellows, get on your feet and line up and receive the spoilt child of fashion. He's coming upstairs: I know his step."

At this instant Woods's body was thrust around the jamb of the door. He still wore the rose in his button-hole, the one Miss B. J. —the original of the portrait—had pinned there.

Mac sprang up and caught the intruder by the shoulders before he had time to open his mouth.

"Been having a tea, have you, you gilt-edged fraud! A highly perfumed powder-puff tea, with lace on the edges and two flounces. 'Oh, how exquisite, dear Mr. Woods! And is it really all hand-painted? and did you do it all yourself? How enormously clever you are— How lovely— How—' Got pretty sick of that sort of taffy after they had gormed you up with it for three hours, didn't you, Woods? and you

had to come up where you could breathe! Now rip off that undertaker's coat, throw away that rose, get into that sketching jacket, and sit down here and disinfect yourself with a pipe—" and Mac's hearty laugh rang through the room.

PART IX

Around the Embers of the Dying Fire.

SPRING had come. The trees in the old Square were tuneful with impatient birds ready to move in and begin housekeeping as soon as the buds poked their yellow heads out of their nestings of bark. The eager sun, who had been trying all winter to gain the corner of Mac's studio window, had finally carried the sash and grimy pane by assault: its beams were now basking on the Daghestan rug in full defiance of the smouldering coals crouching half-dead in their bed of ashes.

From an open window—Mac had thrown it wide—came a breath of summer air, telling of green fields and fleecy clouds; of lappings about the bows of canoes; of balsam beds under bark slants; of white scoured

decks and dancing waves; of queer cafés under cool arched trees and snowy peaks against the blue.

The glorious old fire felt the sun's power and shuddered, trembling with an ill-defined fear. It knew its days were numbered, perhaps its hours. No more romping and skylarking; no more outbursts of crackling laughter; no more scurrying up the ghostly chimney, the madcap sparks playing hide-and-seek in the soot; no more hugging close of the old logs, warming themselves and everybody about them; no more jolly nights with the hearth swept and the pipes lighted, the faces of the smokers aglow with the radiance of the cheery blaze.

Its old enemy, the cold, had given up the fight and had crept away to hide in the North; so had the snow and the icy winds. No more! No more! Spring had come. Summer was already calling. Now for big bowls of blossoms, their fragrance mingling

Around the embers of the dying fire.

with the pungent odor of slanting lines of smoke. Now for half-closed blinds, through which sunbeams peeped and restless insects buzzed in and out. Now for long afternoons, soft twilights, and wide-open windows, their sashes framing the stars.

Mac had noted the signs and was getting ready for the change. Already had he opened his dust-covered trunk and had hauled out, from a collection of tramping shoes, old straw hats, and summer clothes, a thin painting coat in place of his pet velveteen jacket. It was only at night that he raked out the coals hiding their faces in the ashes, gathered them together—the fire had never gone out since the day he lighted it—and encouraged them with a comforting log.

Most of the members had formed their plans for the summer; one or two had already bidden good-by to the Circle. Lonnegan was off trout-fishing, and Jack Stirling was three days out—off the Banks really.

"Gone to look up Christine and the old boys and girls," Marny said; at which Mac shook his head, knowing the bee, and knowing also the kinds and varieties of flowers which grew in the gardens most frequented by that happy-go-lucky fellow.

Murphy was back in London; cabled for, and left without being able to bid anybody good-by. "Throw on another stick," he had written Mac by the pilot-boat, "and give the dear old logs a friendly punch and tell 'em it is from that wild Irishman, Murphy. I'd give you a tract of woodland if I had one, and build you a fireplace as big as the nave of a church. I shall never forget my afternoons around your fire, MacWhirter. You and your back-logs and the dear boys warmed me clear through to my heart. Keep my chair dusted, I'm coming back if I live."

With the budding trees and soft air and all the delights of the out-of-doors, the attendance even of those members who still

remained in town began to drop off. Only when a raw, chill wind blew from the east, reminding us of the winter and the welcome of Mac's fire, would the chairs about the hearth be filled. Boggs, Pitkin, Woods, Marny, and I were the only ones who came with any regularity.

"Got to cover them up, Colonel," Mac said to me the last afternoon the fire was alight. I had arrived ahead of the others and had found him crooning over the smouldering logs, looking into the embers. "They've been mighty good to us all winter—never sulked, never backed out; start them going and give them a pat or two on their backs and away they went." He spoke as if the logs were alive. "Lots of comfort we've had out of them; going to have a lot more next year, too. I shall bury the embers of the last fire —perhaps this one, I can't tell—in its ashes and keep the whole till we start them up in the autumn. It will seem then like the same

old fire. The flowers lie dead all winter but they bloom from the same old charred ember of a root. All the root needs is the sun and all the coals need is warmth. And the two never bloom in the same season—that's the best part of it."

He had not once looked at me as he spoke; he knew me by my tread, and he knew my voice, but his eyes had not once turned my way, not even when I took the chair beside him.

"And what are *you* going to do, Mac, all summer? Got any plans?"

"Got plenty of plans, but no money. Heard there was a man nibbling around my 'East River'—but you can't tell. Brown, the salesman, says it's as good as sold, but I've heard Brown say those things before. Exhibition closes this week. Guess the distinguished connoisseur, Mr. A. MacWhirter, will add that picture to his collection: that closet behind us is full of 'em."

"Where would you like to go, old man?"

"Oh, I don't know, Colonel. I'd like to try Holland once more and get some new skies—and boats."

"Nothing on this side, Mac?" I was not probing for subjects for Mac's brush.

"No, don't seem so. Can't sell them anyhow. I thought my 'East River' was about the best I had done, but nobody wants it. Cook calls it a 'Melancholy Monochrome,' and that other critic—I forget his name—says it lacks 'spontaneity,' whatever that is. I ought to have stayed at home and helped my Governor instead of roaming round the world deluding myself with the idea that I could paint. About everything I've tried has failed: Had to borrow the money to get me to Munich; took me three years to pay it back, doing pot-boilers; even painted signs one time. Been chasing these phantoms now for a good many years, but I haven't got anywhere. I'd rather paint than eat, but I've

got to eat—that's the worst of it. A little encouragement, too, would help. I try not to mind what Cook says about my things, but it hurts all the same. And yet if he ever over-praised my work it would be just as offensive. What I want is somebody to come along and get underneath the paint and find something of myself and what I am trying to do with my brush. It may be monotonous to Cook; it isn't to me. I could crisp up my 'East River' with a lot of cheap color and a boat or two with figures in the foreground, but it was that vast silence of the morning that I was after, and the silvering quality of the dawn. Doesn't everybody see that? some of them can't. Well, in she goes with the rest; you'll all have a fine bonfire when I'm gone. I'll keep out the one hanging over the lounge and maybe another back somewhere in that mausoleum of a closet. I'll give one to you, old man, if you'll promise to take care of it," and Mac took an unframed canvas from the

wall and propped it up on a chair. There were dozens of others around it and so it had never attracted my attention.

"Not much—just a garden wall and a bench—pretty black—too much bitumen, I guess," and he wet his finger and rubbed the canvas.

I took the sketch in my hand and examined it carefully. It was dated "Lucerne," and signed with two initials, not Mac's.

"Old sketch?"

"Yes, about fifteen years ago."

"Doesn't look like your work."

"It isn't."

"Who did it?"

"A pupil of mine."

"Girl?"

Mac nodded, replaced the sketch on the wall and sank into his chair again.

"Only pupil I ever had. She and her mother had spent the winter in Munich—that's where I met her."

"It is signed 'Lucerne,' " I said.

"Yes, I followed her there."

"To teach?"

"No; because I loved her."

The announcement came so suddenly that for a moment I could not answer. He often gave me his confidence, and I thought I knew his life, but this was news to me. I had always suspected that some love affair had sweetened and mellowed his nature, but he always avoided the subject and I had, of course, never pressed my inquiries. If he was ready to tell me now I was willing to listen with open ears.

"You loved her, Mac?" I said simply.

"Yes, as a boy loves; without thought—crazily—only that one idea in his mind; ready to die for her; no sleep; sometimes a whole day without tasting a mouthful; floating on soap-bubbles. Ah! we never love that way but once. It was all burned out of me though, that summer. I've just lived on ever

since—painting a little, nursing these old logs, hobnobbing with you boys; getting older—most forty now—getting poorer."

"And did she love you, Mac?"

"Yes, same way. Only she got over it and I didn't."

"Some other fellow?"

"No, her father. Oh, there's no use going into it! But sometimes when I do my level best and put my heart into a thing, as I have done into that picture at the Academy, or as I poured it out to that girl in that old garden at Lucerne, and it all comes to naught, I lose my grip for a time and feel like putting my foot through my canvases and hiring out somewhere for a dollar a day."

I made no comment. My long years of intimacy with my friend had taught me never to interrupt him when he was in one of these moods, and never to ask him any question outside the trend of his thoughts.

"Self-made, dominating man, her father;

began life as a brass-moulder. 'Worked with my hands, sir,' he would tell me, holding out his stubs of fingers. Didn't want any loafers and spongers around him. He didn't say that to me, of course, but he did to her. The mother was different, like the daughter; she believed in me. She believed in anything Nell liked. Behind in her music—that's what she came to Munich for; and when she wanted to paint, hunted me up to teach her. She was eighteen and I was twenty-three. Well, you can fill in the rest. Every day, you know; sometimes at my hole in the wall, sometimes at her apartment. Went on all winter. In May he came over and wired them to meet him in Lucerne. We tried parting; sat up half the night, we three, talking it over—the dear mother helping. She loved us both by that time! I tried it for two days and then locked up my place and started. That old garden was where we met and where we continued to meet. He came down one

morning to see what we were doing; we were doing that sketch—had been doing it for two weeks. Some days it got a brushful of paint and some days it didn't. You know how hard you would work when the girl you loved best in the world sat beside you looking up into your face. Sometimes the dear mother would be with us, and sometimes she would make believe she was. In the intervals she was working on the old gentleman, trying to break it to him easy. 'You have worked all your life,' she would say to him, 'and you have, outside of me, only two things left—your money and your daughter. The money won't make her happy unless there is somebody to share it with her. This boy loves her; he is clean'—I'm just quoting her words, old man; I was in those days—'honest, has an honorable profession, and will succeed the better once he has Nellie to help him and your money to relieve his mind for the time of anxiety. When he becomes famous, as he

is sure to be, he will return it to you with interest.' That was the sort of talk, and it occurred about every day. Nellie would hear it and add her voice, and we would talk it over in the garden.

"One day he came down himself. The garden was up the hill behind the Schweitzerhoff—you remember it—in one of those smaller hotels—Lucerne was crowded.

" 'Let me see what you two are doing,' he said, with a sort of police-officer air.

"I turned the easel toward him. The sketch was about as you see it—all except the signature and the word 'Lucerne'—that I added afterward.

" 'How long have you been at this?'

" 'About two weeks,' I said. I thought I'd give it its full time, so as to prove to him how carefully it had been painted.

" 'Two weeks, eh?' he repeated slowly. 'Done anything else?'

" 'No.'

" 'What's it worth?'

" 'Well, it's only a study, sir.'

" 'Well, but what's it worth?'

"I thought for a moment, and then, knowing how he valued everything by his own standard, said:

" 'I should think, perhaps, fifty dollars, when it's finished.'

" 'That's at the rate of twenty-five dollars a week, isn't it? A little over three dollars a day. I earned more than that, young man, when I was younger than you, and I was making something that was *sold* before I turned a hand to it. You've got to shop your things around till you sell 'em. Come into the house, Nellie, I want to speak to you.'

"Brutal, wasn't it? I have hated his kind ever since. Money! Money! Money! You'd think the only thing in life was the accumulation of dollars. Flowers bloom, mists curl up mountain sides, brooks laugh in the sunlight, birds sing, and children romp

and play. There is poverty and suffering and death; there are stricken hearts needing help; kind words to speak; famishing minds to educate; there is art, and science, and music—Nothing counts. Money! Money! Money! I'm sick of it!"

"And that ended it with the girl?" I asked, without moving my head from my hand.

"Yes, practically. She went to Paris and I went back to Munich. I felt as if my heart had been torn out of me; like a plant twisted up by the roots. The letters came—first every day, then once or twice a week, then at long intervals. You won't believe it, old man, but do you know that wound never healed for years; hasn't yet, parts of it. Shams, flaunted wealth, society—all irritate it, and me. It seemed so cruel, so damned stupid. What counts but love, I would say to myself over and over again. If I had a million dollars, what better off would I be?

If we were both on a desert island without a cent we could be happy together, and if we had a million apiece and didn't love each other we would be miserable. Quixotic, I know, indefensible, out of date with modern methods, but I'd give my career if more of that sort of doctrine saturated the air we breathe."

"You saw her again?"

"Yes, once in Paris, driving with her husband. This was about five years ago. She didn't see me, although I stood within ten feet of her. He was much older, older than I am now, I should think. Commonplace sort of fellow—see a dozen like him any morning on the Avenue going down to Wall Street. Only her eyes were left, and the fluff of hair about her forehead. She made no impression on me; she wasn't the woman I loved. My memories were of a girl in the garden, all in white, her hair about her shoulders, the molten sunlight splashed here and

there, the cool shadow tones between the drippings of gold. And the sound of her voice, and the way she raised her eyes to mine! No, it never comes but once. It is the bloom on the peach, the flush of dawn, never repeated in any other sky; the thrill of the first kiss at the altar, the cry of the first child. Yours! Yours! for ever and ever!

"Talking like a first-class idiot, am I not, old man? But I can't help it. And I get so lonely for it sometimes! Often when you fellows go home and I am left alone at night I draw up by this fire and build castles in the coals. And I see so many things: the figure of a woman, the uplifted hands of children, paths leading to low porticos, gardens with tall flowers along their paths, an arm about my neck and a warm cheek held close to mine. I know I am only half living tucked up here pegging away, and that I ought to shake myself loose and go out into the world more and see what it is made of.

In a few years I'll be frozen fast into my habits like an old branch in a stream when the winter's cold strikes it. Only you and the other boys and the fire keep me young."

"Have you never met anybody since, Mac, you cared for?" I had braced myself for that question, wondering how he would take it.

"Yes, once, but she never knew it. I had nothing—why begin over again? It would have turned out like the other—worse. Then I was too young, now I'm too old. Besides, she's on the other side of the water; lives there."

"She liked you?"

"Oh, I don't know. Women are hard to understand. I never abuse their confidence when they trust me, and they generally do trust me when I get close to them. I seem always to be the big brother to them and so they let themselves go, knowing I won't misunderstand. Women *like* me, they don't love

me—great difference. A lot of men make this mistake, thinking a woman is in love with them when she only wants to be kind. She can't always be on the defensive and still be natural. The greatest relief that can come to one of them is to find that the man whom she wants only as a companion is contented to be that and nothing more and won't take advantage of her confidence. So I say I don't know. She was a human kind of a girl, this one—real human."

Here Mac paused for an instant, his eyes on the fast-dying embers—as if he were recalling the girl more clearly to his mind. "Had a heart for things outside of her own affairs. Girl a man could tie up to. Human, I tell you—real human!"

"Follow it up, Mac?" He had volunteered nothing about her personality, and I dared not ask.

"No, let it go. I've been hoping I'd make a hit some time and then maybe I'd—no,

don't talk about it any more. Listen! who's that coming upstairs? That's Woods, I know his step. Happy fellow! Hear his whistle—he must have got another order for a full-length; nothing like powder-puff teas for encouraging American art, my boy," and a smile crept over Mac's face, which broadened into a laugh when he added, "I'm beginning to think that a course in cooking is as necessary for a painter as a course in perspective."

The expected arrival was by this time beating a rat-a-tat-too on the Chinese screen, his whistle more shrill than ever.

"Come in, you pampered child of fashion!" cried Mac, the sound of Woods's joyous step having completely changed the current of his thoughts. "Stop that racket, I tell you. We know you've got another portrait, but don't split our ears over it."

A black slouch hat rose slowly above the edge of the screen, then a lock of hair, and

then a round fat face in a broad grin. It was Boggs!

"Thought you were Woods," cried Mac.

"I'm aware of that idiotic mistake on your part, great and masterful painter," burst out Boggs, bowing grandiloquently.

"You're not half so good-looking as Woods, you fat woodchuck," shouted back Mac.

"I am aware of it, great and masterful painter, but I am infinitely more valuable. I carry priceless things about me. In fact I'm just chuck-full of priceless things. Shake me and I'll exude glad tidings. Marvellous events are happening at the Academy. I have just left there, and I *know!* The main stairway is in the hands of a mob of disappointed millionnaires pressing up toward the South Room. Every art critic in town is clinging to the columns craning his head. Brown is in a collapse, his body stretched out on one of the green sofas. All eyes are fast-

ened—even Brown's glazed peepers—on a small yellow card slipped into the lower left-hand corner of a canvas occupying the centre of the south wall. Before it, down on his knees, pouring out his heart in thankfulness, is the happy purchaser, the tears rolling down his cheeks, his——"

"Boggs, what the devil are you talking about!" cried Mac, a sudden light breaking out on his face. "Do you mean——"

"I do, most masterful painter—I mean just that! Toot the hewgag! Bang the lyre! The 'East River' is sold!"

"Sold!"

"SOLD! you duffer!"

"Who to?" Mac's voice had an unsteady tremor in it.

"To Pitkins's friend, the banker. He's wild about it. Says he's been looking for something of yours ever since the night he was here, and only knew you had a picture on exhibition when he read Cook's abuse of

it in yesterday's paper. And that isn't all! No sooner had the 'Sold' card been slipped into the frame than Mr. Blodgett came in; swore he had been intending to buy the 'East River' for his gallery ever since the show opened; offered an advance of five hundred dollars to the banker, who laughed at him; and then in despair bought your other picture, 'The Storm,' hung on the top line. Both sold, O most masterful painter! All together now, gentlemen—

" 'Should auld acquaintance be forgot—' " and Boggs's voice rang out in the tune he knew Mac loved best.

Mac dropped into his chair. The news thrilled him in more ways than one. Certain vague, hopeless plans could now, perhaps, be carried out; plans he had driven from his mind as soon as they had taken shape: Holland for one, which seemed nearer of realization now than ever. So did some others.

"Millionnaires have their uses, Mac, after all," laughed Marny.

"Yes, but this fellow was an exception. He filled my mug and——"

"—And your pocket," added Boggs; "don't forget that, you ingrate. Again—all together, gentlemen—

" 'Should auld acquaintance be forgot——' "

This time Boggs sang the couplet to the end, Mac and all of us joining in.

When all the others had gone I still kept my chair. There was one thing more I wanted to know. Mac was on his feet, restlessly pacing the room, a quickness in his step, a buoyant tone in his voice that I had not noticed all winter.

"Sit down here, old man, and let me ask you a question."

"No," answered Mac, "fire it at me here. I'm too happy to sit down. What is it?"

"Was that human girl you spoke of, who lives abroad, the one in the steamer chair with the red roses in her lap?"

Mac stopped and laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Yes; I got a letter from her this morning."

"And you are going over?"

"By the first steamer, old man."

THE END

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